UNLV Opera’s 2014-15 Season: Little Red to Figaro

UNLV Opera’s 2014-15 season begins with a pairing of two children’s operas. Seymour Barab’s version of the familiar Little Red Riding Hood opens the double bill. The program continues with Maurice Ravel’s enchanting opera, L’enfant et les sorilèges, or The Bewitched Child. These charming one-acts will be presented in the Paul Harris Theatre November 13-15.

The fall semester’s operatic lineup finishes with the Opera Workshop’s scenes program on December 5 in Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall. This program features scenes about musicians, including excerpts from The Barber of Seville, The Magic Flute, and L’Orfeo. The title for this program is inspired by an opera by Antonio Salieri entitled Prima la musica, poi le parole (First the music, then the words).

The major production of the 2014-15 season is Mozart’s beloved opera The Marriage of Figaro. Based on Beaumarchais’ classic eighteenth-century play, Le nozze di Figaro will be sung in Italian with English supertitles. The UNLV Symphony Orchestra joins us for the production in the Judy Bayley Theatre March 20-22. Look for more information on Figaro in the spring edition of Opera Rebels.

Finally, the UNLV Opera season concludes with the spring Opera Workshop presentation on April 24 in Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall. The famous quote from Shakespeare’s Hamlet provides the title for this scenes program: The Play’s the Thing. The performance will highlight excerpts from operas and musicals based on Shakespearean theatre including Verdi’s Falstaff, Nicolai’s The Merry Wives of Windsor, Bellini’s I Capuleti e i Montecchi (The Capulets and the Montagues), Bernstein’s West Side Story, and Porter’s Kiss Me, Kate.

Join us for a varied season of colorful characters from Little Red Riding Hood to Figaro. Compare the music of Mozart and Salieri, and explore operatic realizations of Shakespeare, all while enjoying the vocal talents of the students of UNLV.
UNLV Opera presents Children’s Operas November 13-15

You don’t have to be a child to enjoy the two children’s operas UNLV Opera is presenting this fall. The popular fairy tale Little Red Riding Hood, as realized by American composer Seymour Barab, stars Lacy Burchfield as Little Red. Nicole Thomas plays Red’s Mother and Grandmother, and Xavier Brown is the Big Bad Wolf. Maurice Ravel’s clever fantasy L’enfant et les sortilèges tells the story of a little boy whose bad behavior makes his furniture start talking and turns his bedroom into a garden of singing animals and plants. Olivia Sirota stars as the titular Bewitched Child. Cassandra O'Toole plays Fire, while Cheyna Alexander is the Princess. The singing animals include cats Jordan Madagame and Nicole Harris, dragonfly Breanna Lesure, owl Eliysheba Anderson, nightingale Bonita Bunt, bat Stephanie Redman, and frog Armando Quintanilla. Daveon Bolden and Rabuel Aviles are the Tea-set, Christophe Kennedy and Olivia Gjorgoska the Chairs, while Christopher Withrow is the Clock. Mark McCreery voices the Tree, Alex Price and Ashlee Ruder are the Shepherd and Shepherdess, and Edwin Cerna II portrays the child’s math homework. Music Director Kosta Popovic is also pianist for the production. Under the direction of Kaitlin Simonson, Canarelli Middle School Chorus joins UNLV Opera as the chorus of numbers. Daniella Toscano designs the costumes while Suzanne Stone and Ebony Green are the indispensable stage management team. Come be bewitched by Barab’s Little Red and Ravel’s Bewitched Child November 13-15 at 7:30 in the Paul Harris Theatre.
Diva in Training: Lacy Burchfield

Sophomore Lacy Burchfield isn’t your average soprano. Besides pursuing a vocal performance degree at UNLV, this versatile young woman is also pursuing a piano degree in music education. This semester, she will have to balance practicing two instruments while playing the title role in UNLV Opera’s production of Little Red Riding Hood. “I’ve always loved music,” Lacy says. “When I was about 6 years old, I would sit at my grandmother’s piano and create my own songs. I first got into singing when I joined choir in 6th grade because of all the fun field trips. In high school, I made the most advanced chamber choir as a freshman. At UNLV, I have accompanied singers, and have fallen in love with opera.” Catch Lacy’s first leading operatic role when she sings the title character in Barab’s opera.

Alumni Updates

UNLV Opera alumni are gracing stages both nationally and internationally: Dominick Chenes debuted as Riccardo in Austin Lyric Opera’s Un ballo in maschera. Brian Myer was a studio artist with Chautauqua Opera over the summer and next will sing Silvio in Sarasota Opera’s Pagliacci. Isabella Ivy is a resident artist with Opera San Jose, premiering as Gilda in Rigoletto. Myer and Ivy join Cecilia Violetta Lopez in the world premiere of Where Angels Fear to Tread this spring in San Jose. Lopez earned rave reviews for her debut in the Martina Arroyo Foundation’s La Traviata: “she is a Violetta fully-formed and, I think, ready for the great stages of the world.” Another reviewer called her “aptly named (Santa Cecilia being the patron saint of music).” She was also a finalist in Placido Domingo’s elite Operalia Competition sponsored by L.A. Opera.

Prima la musica: Opera Workshop Scenes December 5

This fall, UNLV Opera Workshop presents a behind-the-scenes peek into the lives of musicians. The mythological musician Orpheus is featured in both Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo and Offenbach’s Orpheus in the Underworld. Students will perform famous singing lesson scenes from The Barber of Seville and The Mystery of Edwin Drood, as well as lesser known excerpts from Haydn’s La cantarina and Herbert’s operetta Serenade. Fans of Phantom of the Opera may not know Maury Yeston’s Phantom (considered musically superior to Lloyd Webber’s), which is sure to be a highlight of the program. The award-winning play and film Amadeus (1984) examined the relationship between composers Mozart and Antonio Salieri. An opera by Rimsky-Korsakov also explores the dynamic, and an excerpt from his Mozart and Salieri will be framed by scenes from Mozart’s The Magic Flute and Salieri’s Prima la musica, poi le parole (First the music, then the words). Join us December 5 at 7:30 pm in Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall for an evening of high drama and high notes.

“Charming Ariadne sure to win many hearts”

Richard Davis gave an “A” to UNLV Opera’s Ariadne auf Naxos. He wrote, “In this charming production, Lillian Roberts was perfect in the Prima Donna/Ariadne role. Her rich soprano was more than up to the task, as was her comic acting. In the pants role of the Composer, mezzo soprano Stephanie Weiss gave a convincing performance both vocally and as an actor in this central role. Baritone Xavier Brown stood out vocally as Harlequin as part of the very funny quartet. Kosta Popovic and the UNLV Symphony Orchestra performed Strauss’ wall of sound magnificently.”

Kudos to all involved with this successful show!
UNLV OPERA THEATER

Opera Rebels

editor: Linda Lister

Save the dates!

UNLV OPERA THEATER

Fall 2014 Performances

Nov. 13-15  UNLV Opera Theater:
Little Red Riding Hood by Barab
The Bewitched Child by Ravel

Dec. 5  UNLV Opera Workshop:
Prima la musica
(Music by Mozart, Bizet, Rossini)

UNLV OPERA THEATER

From UNLV Opera’s Spring 2014 production of Ariadne auf Naxos

Left to right:
Jonathan Mancheni, Sheronda McKee, Xavier Brown,
David Casey, Erickson Franco

(Photo by Shamith Dilan Gamage)