

California Opera Association

AMAHL & THE
NIGHT VISITORS

BY GIAN CARLO MENOTTI





Peter Wu, Amahl

Peter Wu has been singing and performing for several years, first studying opera at age 6. He last performed the title role of Amahl with California Opera in 2021. At that time, when asked what he liked about opera, he said, "I have liked singing and listening to music since I was very young!" He rejoins us in Fresno from the Bay Area after performances of the Sandman in Engelbert's *Hansel and Gretel*, the role of *Chip and His Dog*, Cal Opera summer opera arts festivals, and lead roles in school holiday productions.

Menotti distinctly wanted Amahl to be performed by a boy. California Opera introduced 9-year-old Peter Wu in the title role in 2021, pictured here with General Artistic Director Edna Garabedian, who began working with Peter on the role online through Zoom sessions throughout COVID-19 to help prepare him for the role.

Gian Carlo Menotti was commissioned by Peter Herman Adler, director of NBC's programming, to write the first opera for television. The composer was inspired by *The Adoration of the Magi* by Hieronymus Bosch hanging in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

As the airdate neared, singers had little time to rehearse and received the final passages of the score just days before the broadcast. The composer's partner Samuel Barber was brought in to complete the orchestrations. After the dress rehearsal, NBC Symphony conductor Arturo Toscanini told Menotti, "This is the best you've ever done."

Amahl and the Night Visitors aired annually on NBC for 14 consecutive Christmases, starting with its premiere on December 24, 1951, becoming a beloved holiday tradition as the first opera written for television, and was broadcast live nationwide each year through 1964.





Hanna Staley

Originally from Clovis, Hanna is a vocal major graduate of Fresno Pacific University and continues currently in the master's program. She was the recent finalist and recipient of a Martinovich International Voice Competition award. Hanna has performed with California Opera among other groups for several years, as Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, Clotilde in *Norma*, the title role in *Iolanthe*, Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, and in *La Traviata*, *Patience*, and *Carmen* as cover for the roles of Frasquita and Michaëla.

She continues recitals and masterclasses nationally after touring internationally with choral ensembles. She performed as an ensemble vocalist in several opera productions and with the Idyllwild Arts Festival Choir at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, in New York with the Fresno City choirs at Carnegie Hall, in Australia with the International Honor Choir Honors Performance Series at the Sydney Opera House, and in Germany, and Belgium. For several years, Hanna has served as a cantor at Saint Paul Newman Center and as the Cal Opera chorus president.

The Story of "Amahl and the Night Visitors"

is one of blessings, forgiveness, sacrifice, and love. Amahl is impoverished with his mother and can't walk without his crutch that he made himself. His mother fears that her son will become a beggar. He is known for telling tall tales so when he tells his mother about a star and some very special visitors, she can't believe him. With some convincing, she realizes they really are being visited by Three Kings, the Magi, or the Three Wise Men, who are on their way to see the infant Jesus, guided by the star. During the night, the mother wrestles with temptation for the king's riches, as she sings, "All That Gold." The Three Kings tell her that the baby Jesus will be a King who will build His kingdom on love and not gold. Hearing this, Amahl and his mother want to send something with them for this new King who is still yet a baby. Amahl offers the only thing he thinks has value in their home...

GIAN CARLO MENOTTI 1911-2007

As an Italian-American composer, librettist, director, and playwright primarily known for 25 operas, he often referred to himself as an American composer, yet kept his Italian citizenship.

One of the most frequently performed opera composers of the 20th century, his most successful works were written in the 1940s and 1950s. Highly influenced by Puccini and Mussorgsky, Menotti further developed the verismo tradition of opera in the post-World War II era. Rejecting atonality and the aesthetic of the Second Viennese School, Menotti's music is characterized by expressive lyricism which carefully sets language to natural rhythms in ways that highlight textual meaning and underscore dramatic intent.

Menotti, like Wagner, wrote the libretti of all his operas, well-known for his classic 1951 Christmas-time opera *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, as he continued to appeal to popular taste. Many of Menotti's operas enjoyed successful Broadway runs, including two Pulitzer Prize winning works, *The Consul* (1950) and *The Saint of Bleecker Street* (1955).

While all of his works were composed with English language libretti, he also penned the Italian language libretti to three of his operas: *Amelia Goes to the Ball* (1937), *The Island God* (1942), and *The Last Savage* (1963). He founded the *Festival dei Due Mondi* (Festival of the Two Worlds) in Spoleto in 1958 and its American counterpart, Spoleto Festival USA, in 1977. It was at the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina, in the 1980s that California Opera Artistic Director Edna Garabedian met and began working closely with Menotti as a dramatic mezzo-soprano, performing in many of his operas throughout his Spoleto Festival years.

In addition to his operas, Menotti wrote music for several ballets, numerous choral works, chamber music, orchestral music of varying kinds including a symphony, and stage plays. Notable among these is his cantata *The Death of the Bishop of Brindisi*, written in 1963, and the cantata *Landscapes and Remembrances* in 1976 – a descriptive work of Menotti's memories of America written for the United States Bicentennial. Menotti also was commissioned by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore for the *Mass for the Contemporary English Liturgy*.

Menotti taught music composition on the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music from 1948 through 1955. He also served as the Artistic Director of the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma in the 1990s and directed operas periodically for notable organizations such as the Salzburg Festival and the Vienna State Opera.



COMPOSER MENOTTI
His opera is vastly gloomy.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

General Artistic Direction, Edna Garabedian Collaborative Pianist, Drew Quiring

Amahl * Peter Wu Mother * Hanna Staley
Melchior * Steve Chi Kaspar * Joseph Yeh
Balthazar * Henry Haven Page * Dawson Yeh

Shepherds and Shepherdesses

Jeff Dimarco * Gerry Eden * Jenni Eden * Fran Friesen * Dulce Flores
Leslie Janzen * Adrianna Maldonado * James McKinney * Mizuho Murakami
Debi Ruud * Harry Sager * Charlotte Showers * Angela Storey * Christine Villareal

SOLOISTS

Jenni Eden & Gerry Eden * Hanna Staley & Adrianna Maldonado
Anisha Pradhan * Debi Ruud * Angela Storey

ANGELS

Violet Fierro, Gaia Fierro, Rhea Fierro, and Sage Fierro

Sets and Props Management

Larry Barber

FAMILY DAY

Susan Yost-Filgate, Fresno Art Museum



SING-A-LONG



Joy to The World

Isaac Watts in 1719, Watts published a book of poems - one of those poems was an adaptation of Psalm 98, adapted and set to music to give us what has become one of the most famous of all Christmas carols:

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come; Let earth receive her King!
Let every heart prepare him room And heaven and nature sing!
And heaven and nature sing! And heaven . . . and heaven . . . and nature sing.*

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

An English Christmas carol, made popular by composer, conductor and organist
Arthur Warrell (1883–1939):

*We wish you a Merry Christmas, We wish you a Merry Christmas,
We wish you a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!
Good tidings we bring to you and your kin,
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*



Edna Garabedian, Dramatic Mezzo-Soprano, as opera founder, master teacher, coach, and stage director has performed to critical and popular acclaim in the United States and throughout Europe and Asia. Ms. Garabedian is widely well known to opera audiences, as a world-renowned mezzo-soprano and leading lady of opera, performing and directing across the world's finest opera stages. Ms. Garabedian most recently stage-directed operas in Italy, Romania, Mexico, and California after completing production for two Hollywood films, and appeared in with the National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia. Just a few of the companies with which she has performed opera's favorite lead roles include: Munich Opera, Frankfurt Opera, Kassel Opera, Nurnberg Opera, Hannover Opera, Staatsoper Bonn, the Spoleto Festival, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Music Center Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Houston Opera, San Diego Opera, Baltimore Opera, Kansas City Lyric Opera and Portland Opera. These roles have included Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Amneris in *Aida*, Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Grangane in *Tristan und Isolde*, Klytemnestra in *Elektra*, Herodias in *Salome*, Eboli in *Don Carlos*, Kontchakovna in *Prince Igor*. At the Hannover Opera, she performed Amneris and the title role of *Carmen*. Ms. Garabedian is notably acclaimed for Czech Opera to which her repertoire includes Kabanicha in *Katya Kabanova* with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera. Ms. Garabedian made several profound debuts including the Spoleto Festival as Agatha in Menotti's *Maria Golovin*, Edmonton Opera as Katisha in *The Mikado* and Virginia Opera as Madam Flora in *The Medium*, and Waltraute in *Die Walkure* for Florentine Opera. Ms. Garabedian recently completed a Fest contract with the Staatsoper Bonn at the invitation of Gian Carlo Del Manaco singing all three roles in *Il Trittico*, the Mother and the Nexe and Gertrude in *Hansel and Gretel*, Wowkle in *Fanciulla del West*, Herodias in *Salome*, Emilia in *Otello* and Kostelnicha in *Jenafa*. She has numerous awards to her credit including winner of the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, Baltimore Opera Auditions, and Nationals of the Metropolitan Opera competitions. Ms. Garabedian has taught at the International Music Institute of Sao Paulo, Brazil, has been Chairman of Voice and Opera at the University of Connecticut and University of the Pacific, and served as Professor of Voice on faculty of Northern Illinois University, California State University at Fresno, American University and San Francisco University. Recently, Ms. Garabedian has been appointed Ambassador of International Artistic Exchange and as Artistic Director of Opera Company of Hangzhou, in the capital of Zhejiang province, Republic of China where she directed Carmen and returned to Taiwan for further artistic development of the provinces. Ms. Garabedian continued as Artistic Director for the San Francisco's Golden Gate Opera productions and Opera SLO, with just some of the features including *Carmen*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Suor Angelica*, *Pagliacci*, *Carousel*, *Lincoln and Booth*, and *Hansel and Gretel*. She recently directed *Gianni Schicci* in Romania and additional works in Italy and Mexico. As the founder of Fresno Grand Opera and as CEO/Artistic Director of California Opera in Fresno, she directed *La Traviata*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Il Trovatore*, *Carmen*, *La Sonnambula*, *The Magic Flute*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and several other mainstage operas, cantatas and buffa works, in addition to most of Menotti's operas such as *Maria Golovin*, *The Counsul*, *The Medium*, *Old Maid and the Thief*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and *Chip and His Dog* for children. Ms. Garabedian is integral in promoting the premieres of contemporary operas, such as Victor Kioulaphides' *Silver Swan*, Paul Stuarts' *Kill Bear Comes Home* and the *Sisters of Manzanar* and *The Peacock Princess* composed by Maestro Zang Zong. Adjudicating major international music competitions, she recently judged the International Chinese Music Competition and the Martinovich International Competition and Leoncavallo Competitions of Italy. As a coach and master teacher, Ms. Garabedian also provides private consultations and masterclass tours, with her own private students progressing to grand prize competitions and performances at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and Teatro alla Scala, among many other stages of worldwide esteem. She has been revered for her therapeutic work with challenging and rehabilitating voices, and for her emphasis on role and repertoire development, stage deportment, dramatic presentation, vocal pedagogy and technique, physical strengthening, musicality, and command of the Italian, German, Russian, Czech, Armenian, Spanish, French, and English languages.



Drew Quiring

Acclaimed for his thoughtful and colourful interpretations, Canadian pianist Andrew Quiring is a much sought-after collaborative artist who has performed alongside many notable musicians including soloists from L.A. Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Montreal Symphony Orchestra, Phoenix Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, and National Symphony Orchestra. Drew is currently on staff as the collaborative pianist for Cal State University, Fresno. Prior coaching and pianist engagements include the

Austrian American Mozart Academy in Salzburg; Northwestern State University in Louisiana; the Quartet Program in Fredonia, NY under the direction of Charles Castleman of the Eastman School of Music; and the Franco-American Vocal Academy in Paris and Périgueux, France. During his summers in France, he has also studied at l'Académie Francis Poulenc under the direction of François Le Roux, partnered with the acclaimed French soprano Valérie Condoluci, studying with faculty members of the Paris Conservatoire (CNSMDP). Drew specializes in French music and has given presentations on related topics at the Musical Instrument Museum in Scottsdale, Arizona and through the Music Teachers' Association of California. Drew holds a doctorate in Collaborative Piano Performance from Arizona State University with earlier studies in organ and piano from Toronto and his hometown of Brandon, Manitoba. He is a recipient of multiple grants from the Manitoba Arts Council, and has been a recurring finalist in the Canadian National Music Festival. Drew has participated in various institutional programmes including Centre d'arts Orford, Toronto Summer Music Academy & Festival, Vancouver International Song Institute, and Tafelmusik Baroque Summer Institute. Drew is also an active organist and continuo harpsichordist, and has enjoyed diverse positions from church musician to ballet accompanist, playing all styles with all instruments and voice types.



Joseph Yeh (Tenor, Kaspar)

graduated from the National Taiwan University (BS Degree) and then the University of Southern California (MS Degree). As a performing artist, Joseph appeared as an operatic tenor in *Carmen*, and as the Flavio cover in *Norma*. His music studies began in Junior High as an award-winning tenor soloist in school competitions. Living in Silicon Valley, Joseph joined ROLCC Church chorus and worship team then began taking private voice lessons with Edna Garabedian who helped him develop his operatic

tenor voice. Now as a Chinese-American tenor, with seven years of professional performance experience including singing with California Opera, his most recent roles ranged from Ben in Menotti's *The Telephone* (2025) and First Sailor in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (2024) to Froh in Wagner's *Das Rheingold* (2023), Goro in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (2023), and King Kaspar in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (2022). In addition to his musical career, Joseph works as an engineer in the high-tech industry, balancing artistry with innovation. Outside of work and performance, he enjoys traveling, playing volleyball, reading, and serving as a dedicated choir member at his local church.



HENRY HAVEN

Balthazar, Bass-Baritone

Making his California Opera debut and singing the role of Balthazar for the first time, Henry recently relocated to the San Joaquin Valley to gift citizens with his dedicated care as a career healthcare professional. He previously performed the role of Melchoir in today's beloved story. Sharing his passion for music with his beautifully talented wife, Mezzo-Soprano Spanelly Haven (who is the cover for the Mother's role in today's performances), the blessed duo concertizes throughout the world, raising awareness and funding for sacred music preservation, support, and performance. Henry and Spanelly are currently working on their first sacred album, while continuing to engage audiences through their performances on the operatic stage.



Steve Chi (Melchoir, Baritone)



Steve is an emerging operatic artist, as a baritone with a lifelong passion for music. His vocal journey began in elementary and high school choirs. In 2017, Steve joined the A-sharp Choir in the SF Bay Area, where he continued to develop his craft until 2020. Between 2019 and 2023, he further refined his vocal abilities through formal study at Liya Fang Studio, deepening his understanding of vocal music and performance. Steve recently began a pursuit of operatic performance, after meeting and working with Edna Garabedian in Bay Area productions. He remains dedicated to exploring the art of singing and enjoys sharing his passion through ensemble and solo engagements.

Dawson Yeh (Page, Tenor)

Dawson Yeh is a youth tenor and has performed for the past three years in several benefit concerts and youth program productions. With California Opera, he performed at Fresno's First Congregational Church, the Vineyards, and the Terraces, as an ensemble and solo artist. He is also a high school student-athlete who competes in volleyball and cross country, and enjoys drawing comics, playing video games, learning Japanese, and spending time with friends. He recently made his debut as the page in the Bay Area production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and continues in the role as a visiting artist in Fresno's artistic collaboration for FAMily Day.



Anisha Pradhan (Soloist) Amahl Cover/Understudy

Performing "Gesù bambino," an Italian carol composed by Pietro Yon in 1917, used by Frederick H. Martens in his English language carol "When Blossoms Flowered 'mid the Snows." The melody and lyrics of the chorus are derived from the chorus of "Adeste Fideles" (O Come All Ye Faithful). Anisha Pradhan is a newcomer to the California Opera, having prepared the role of Amahl in anticipation of future performances in the Bay Area and Fresno. Anisha is a student reporter for The Broadview and when not



writing and working on the publication, is singing for the National Children's Chorus and ballroom dancing.



Debi Ruud, Soloist

(Founder of Fresno Music Academy and Arts)

"I'm just happy and grateful to be here, making music and spreading love to our community through the gift of music and the arts." – Debi

Debi has a true passion for music, having started Fresno Music Academy & Arts in 1998 after earning her degree in vocal performance from Fresno State. Debi has been teaching privately for many years and has been singing professionally in the Fresno area for over 25 years. She has sung in numerous groups, such as the Joe Lenigan band, Papa Clutch and The Shifters, and her own Jazz trio. She has been active in musical theater with Good Company Players at Roger Rocka's Dinner Theater & 2nd Space Theatre, and other independent productions, as well as being a very active part of the music ministry for many churches, formerly directing the choir at Bethel Lutheran. Debi's voice has graced many albums, including her own, *Tell the World, Almost There*, and a Christmas album "At Long Last Christmas" recorded with Fresno tenor Bob Bergthold. Debi is constantly performing locally at both group projects and private events. Her voice can be heard on countless jingles and commercials in the Central Valley.

WINTER HOLIDAY OPERA

California Opera Association embraces the following objectives:

- collaborating to support and sustain the influence of western classical music and international traditions on the tapestry of our global society
- presenting affordable, high-quality traditional, contemporary, and premiere works in ways that are innovative and meaningful
- appealing to dedicated opera fans and first-time opera interests
- promoting good will and community involvement through outreach, education, and the participation of children and families in the arts
- providing support for emerging talent, from youth artists just starting out to internationally recognized stage veterans, to impart role and repertoire development, stage experience, career advancement, and exposure.

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California Opera Chorus and the Opera Guild are inviting new members. The chorus is booming beautifully, as they have been rehearsing weekly to bring audiences lively opera ensemble experiences. California Opera welcomes new voices and embraces fresh ideas each week. Similarly, the California Opera Guild continues with the goals of enhancing membership, cultivating leadership, and supporting volunteerism to improve opera-tune-ities in Fresno. Please call 225-6737 (CAL-OPERA) or email californiaoperaguild@gmail.com for more information about how to join the chorus or the guild today!

MAJOR FALL OPERA SPONSORS: Opera in Fresno is made possible by the major support from grants administered by the FRESNO ARTS COUNCIL and Measure P, funded by the citizens of Fresno, the Small Business Administration, and the EECU of Fresno. We thank all the foundations, companies, and individuals for your gracious donations to promote greater interest in, exposure to, and attendance of opera in Fresno. We have enduring appreciation for Dr. & Mrs. William Podolsky, Dr. Harvey Edmonds & Carrie Boolootian, Drs. Marshall & Ximena Flam, Dr. & Mrs. Stanley George, Dr. Don Gaede, Dr. John & Dr. Avis Ambrose, Mr. and Mrs. Jack & Lureline Bickel, and individual donors who remained dedicated throughout the years. We extend our special appreciation to home hosts David Fox, Bill Wolfmann, and Bob Boro. Special gratitude is extended to Phyllis Tung for audio-visual and website productions and support in costuming, transportation, and hospitality. We also gratefully acknowledge all of the volunteers in costuming, make-up, hospitality, and performance specialties, and most especially all the individual contributors, members, and businesses in support of the California Opera Guild under the direction of Boris and Diane Nixon, with the leadership of Lisa Sanchez, Madeline and Nick Esquivel, Deborah Garabedian, Larry Barber, and Frank Vannini.

Thank you all for your enduring commitment to the opera arts!

It is through your enduring love for the arts that opera flourishes in Fresno!

~ Edna Garabedian



Nixon Law Practice

Your Voice Within The Void

Your trusted local experts in family law and domestic violence advocacy, Senior Attorney Zara Nixon performed with California Opera since early youth, including the title role of *Amahl*, before attending UCLA and Loyola Law School. With compassion and determination, she understands the sensitive, serious nature of your case and will fight tirelessly for the justice and protection you deserve. Visit <https://www.nixonlawpractice.com>



ARTS/SV is an ambitious newcomer to the nonprofit arts scene, with smart, big-hearted, forward-thinking goals to nourish and inspire audiences of all ages and walks of life through the support of high-quality California music and theatre arts events. The staff and board of California Opera acknowledge and extend heart-felt appreciation to Maria Chen, who devoted countless volunteer hours to inspire the concept of Arts for Social Change, and who planned and promoted the 2025 Bay Area performances of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, brought to sold-out audiences alongside *Les Misérables* (Schönberg) and *La bohème* (Puccini) selections.



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COUNCIL



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Designed and designated for improving access to arts and culture via the work of cultural arts nonprofit organizations within the City of Fresno.



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