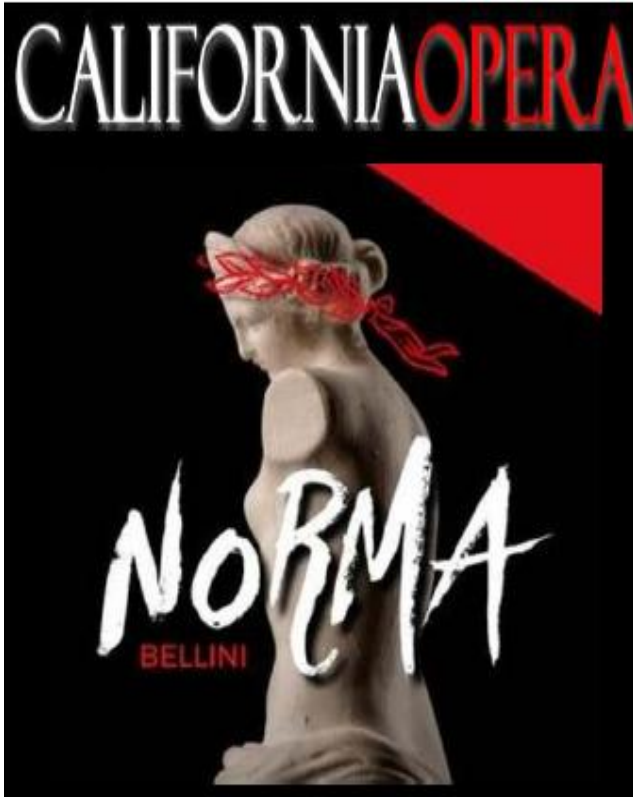


California Opera Association

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Celebrating Over 20 Years of Opera Arts in Fresno

Richard Wagner conducted Norma at Riga in 1837. Wagner wrote at the time that "Norma was indisputably Bellini's most successful composition. In this opera, Bellini has undoubtedly risen to the greatest heights of his talent. In these days of romantic extravaganzas and the hyper-excitement of the so-called musical attractions, he presents a phenomenon which can hardly be overrated. The action, free from all theatrical coups and dazzling effects, reminds one instinctively of a Greek tragedy." Very rightly, Wagner points out that Norma is free of the theatricalism evident in many operas of the period. Bellini chooses to examine the character of his protagonist, and what a character she is! Coming as this opera does, just after the success of his comic opera La Sonnambula, Norma offers a leading female almost diametrically opposed to the innocent Swiss village maiden portrayed therein. Norma is a complex and nuanced figure, caught in a complex and difficult situation which has led her to betray her people, her family, and her vows as a priestess. ~ Rick Adamson, Stage Director



Jamie Bonetto as Norma
A Complicated Heroine



Vincenzo Bellini
(1801-1835)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

General Artistic Direction, Edna Garabedian * Stage Direction and Set Design, Richard Adamson
Costume Design, Randon Pool * Make-Up, Sondra Sharitt * Stage Management, Justine Prado Manro

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Jamie Bonetto: Norma | Todd Wilander: Pollione |
| Gabriel Manro: Oroveso | Alexandra Jerinic: Adalgisa |
| Hanna Staley: Clotilde | Robert Bousquet: Flavio/Trio |
| Bradley Perry: Pollione Cover/Trio | Jason Vincent: Oroveso Cover/Trio |
| Joseph Yeh: Flavio Cover/Trio Cover | Christopher Vinson: Trio Cover |

Adam and Lucy Farley: Children of Norma and Pollione

Vocal Ensemble: Elizabeth Vinson (Clotilde Cover) * Margaret Arguelles * Leslie Bearce * Ron Bearce *
Brian Kurtela * Emma Benatar (Assistant Stage Manager) * Laverne Cottet * Woody Hurst * Kirk Cruz *
Victoria Malko * Mizuho Murakami * Angela Storey * TammyJo Vinson * Mary Ware

California Arts Academy

Daniel Chavez, Lighting Design * Jordan Taylor, Lighting Tech
Choreographer Margaret Hord * Featuring Soloist Julia Cozzi
Demi Soloists: Emma Gomez, Fiona Kelley, Annabelle Raley, Rebekah Vaccaro
Corps: Edith Carter, Daniella Cuenta, Stella Davies, Jenna Leake, Vivienne McCullar,
Olive Orozco, Adyson Perry, Brienne Schulz, Evelyn Vang, Kathleen Warden
Sword Fighters/Sparks: Gabriella DeGeorge and Sophia Singh

Chamber Orchestra

Maestro Gregory Magie
Timothy Leon, Piano * Jordan Williams, Rehearsal Pianist
Matthew Mazzei, Violin I * Araksia Nazlikian, Violin I * Yulia Hess, Violin I
K.C. Simba-Torres, Violin II * Emma Woodward, Violin II * Terry Paul, Viola * Alex Navarro, Viola
Boris Nixon (Music Director), Cello * Whitney Herbst, Bass

Bellini's Norma

For much of the opera, there is an exploration of the relationships between Norma, her secret husband Pollione (the Roman Proconsul of occupied Gaul) and Adalgisa (a fellow Druid priestess who was seduced by Pollione). Further complicating the relationships are two children Norma conceived with Pollione who were hidden from her father, Oroveso (leader of the oppressed Gothic tribes). Everyone thinks the children are those of Clotilda, Norma's confidante and they all live together with this secret. When Pollione plans to return to Rome without her, Norma contemplates ending the lives of her two children so they could escape their ultimate fate of slavery.

Adalgisa, plagued by guilt for breaking her priestly vows of chastity, confesses to Norma, unaware that the very person she has committed the act with is Pollione, Norma's lover. Pollione confronts both women and faces Norma's derision. The last straw for Norma comes when she is informed that Adalgisa has returned to Pollione.

Until that point, Norma managed to counsel her people to not resist the Romans. But now, she now strikes the sacred gong, calling the tribes to war. As the tribes gather, Pollione is discovered and led into Norma's presence.

No longer able to continue the ruse, Norma confesses that she has deceived her people, betrayed her vows and willingly submits to being offered as a human sacrifice, imploring her father to take on her children. Pollione, realizing that he still loves Norma, offers his own life to the flames as the curtain falls.

~ Rick Adamson, Stage Director



Jamie Bonetto (Norma) enjoyed an international childhood, training in France, Italy, Holland and England. It was here that she grew to embrace the opera world. Among the many credits to her name, her formal education includes a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University, selected for the George Shirley Opera Program, and selected to study with Signora Magenta of the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan, Italy. She has performed for audiences across the United States and Europe as a leading lady of the operatic and concert stage. Her world outreach performances included the entertainment of the armed forces overseas organization, The IBLA Foundation concerts in Sicily, Italy and many television appearances. Her operatic repertoire includes Norma in Norma, Violetta in La Traviata, Lucia in Lucia di Lammermoor, Amina in La Sonnambula, Rosina in the Barber of Seville, Gilda in Rigoletto, Adele in Die Fledermaus, Odabella in Attila,

The Queen of the Night in the Magic Flute, Manon in Manon, Adina in The Elixer of Love, Madame Goldentrill in The Impresario, Susanna in The Secret of Susanna, and Mimi in La Boheme. Opera Reviews confirmed that "Bonetto was able to craft dazzling, liquid notes and hang them high on the back rafters and pull them back for an extra caress" (Ink Notes). Pacific Tribune noted that, "Jamie Bonetto has a radiant soprano, full of confidence and strength without borders and she can deliver a real trill."

Alexandra Jerenic, Mezzo-Soprano (Adalgisa) performed Carmen with California Opera. The roles Flora and Annina in La Traviata, Mother in Amahl and the Night Visitors, Alisa in Lucia di Lammermoor, and La Frugola in Il Tabarro have also proved successful, delightful and excellent as recognized by reviewers Donald Munro and Robert Commanday, founder of San Francisco Classical Voice. Special recognition is for vocal flexibility and range noted by S.F. Classical Voice's review of Elisabetta, Regina D'Inghilterra (Matilde). Alix is highly acclaimed for her portrayal of Hansel in Hansel and Gretel, Dorabella in Cossi fan tutte and Cenerentola in La Cenerentola. She debuted Fanny Price in the U.S. orchestrated premier of Jonathan Dove's Mansfield Park with Opera Modesto. Other recent role debuts include Ciesca in Gianni Schicchi at the Opera Romana Craiova. As a Master musician, M.M., Ms. Jerenic excels in 20th century, contemporary opera, exemplified by the success of Dinah in Bernstein's Trouble in Tahiti in 2018. Ms. Jerenic premiered the role of Mrs. Hale in the world premiere of John Bilotta's Trifles, and Miss Proctor in the west coast premiere of The Boy Who Grew Too Fast (Menotti). Other concert credits include Mahler's Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen with the Kensington Symphony Orchestra, the alto soloist in Beethoven's Ninth with the Sequoia Symphony, and guest soloist on tenor Tianfu Zhang's Carnegie Hall recital. Her upcoming engagements include her international concert debut as the alto soloist in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Sofia Philharmonic Orchestra in Sofia, Bulgaria. Ms. Jerenic resides in the San Francisco Bay Area.



California Opera Debuts

Hanna Staley (Clotilde) and Robert Bousquet (Flavio)

A presidential scholar at USC, Robert continued appearances as an American tenor soloist throughout California and Texas, bridging oratorio with the opera stage. Hanna studies at Fresno Pacific University, and performed in recent productions of *Carmen*, *Iolantha*, *La Traviata*, and *The Magic Flute*. Recital and choral experiences included the Idyllwild Arts Festival at the Walt Disney



Concert Hall and travels to Germany, Washington DC, and New York including performing at Carnegie Hall and at the Sydney Opera House in an Honors Performance Series.

Introducing Metropolitan Opera Tenor TODD WILANDER (POLLIONE)

Praised by Opera News for his “clear and sweet lyrical tone” and “brave, vocally assured portrayals,” Todd is among America’s most sought-after leading tenors, performing throughout the US, Europe, and Asia. Since winning The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, he performed with the company as Arturo LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR (James Levine), Almaviva IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA, Beppe I PAGLIACCI, Harry LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST, and in roles in WOZZECK, TWO BOYS, THE NOSE (HD Movie), HAMLET, GAMBLER, MACBETH and FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD. At San Francisco Opera, Mr. Wilander appeared in several leading roles including Tamino DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE, and Thaddeus Stevens THE MOTHER OF US ALL. Other recent performances included Rodolfo LA BOHÈME with Opera Tampa, Radamès AIDA at Bohème Opera New Jersey, Erik DER FLIEGENDE HOLLÄNDER for Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, China, and the title role of Hoffmann in LES CONTES D’HOFFMANN with Opera North. He appeared with Portland Opera as Rodolpho VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, Pollione NORMA for Pacific Opera Northwest Washington, Don José CARMEN for Central Florida Lyric Opera, Calaf TURANDOT at Mississippi Opera, Nevada Opera as Don Ottavio DON GIOVANNI, Opera Delaware as Macduff MACBETH, and many other major roles in classic and contemporary operas at Grant Park Music Festival Chicago, Glimmerglass Opera, Opera Memphis, Santa Fe Opera, St. Petersburg Opera, Opera Saskatchewan, and Chataqua Opera, among others.



Todd Wilander, Pollione
Pacific Opera Northwest Washington

Worldwide engagements continue throughout Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Russia, Austria, Italy, New Zealand, Israel, Hong Kong, Buenos Aires, and Ireland, Whales and the UK,

Mr. Wilander has appeared with many orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, the BBC Radio Orchestra, Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, Los Angeles Music Center Orchestra, Hamburg NDR Philharmonic Orchestra, and Kansas City Symphony Orchestra, among others. Mr. Wilander won several prestigious competitions, including Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Belvedere Competition, Licia Albanese/Puccini Foundation, American Berlin Opera Foundation, Oratorio Society of NY, Enrico Caruso/Altamura Competition and Loren L. Zachary Society Competition.

Originally from Arcadia, California, Todd completed a Bachelor of Arts in Music and Business at California State University, Los Angeles and received a Masters of Music in opera performance and literature from Northwestern University.





Gabriel Manro, Baritone returns to California Opera as Oroveso.

Multiple Grammy Award winning baritone Manro has been called “a new kind of baritone: not lyric, not helden, not Kavalier, not Bariton-Martin — none of those. Rather, he’s a knock-down baritone.” --San Francisco Classical Voice. Indeed, Manro regularly sings dramatic baritone roles such as Don Carlo di Vargas (*La forza del destino*), Andrei Shchelkalov (*Boris Godunov*), and Tonio (*I Pagliacci*). Opera News describes Manro as “Gifted with a striking, sinister baritone that remains strong, even and sonorous throughout the range, he tears into Verdi’s music with a vengeance.” Gabriel made his professional operatic debut as Third Inmate in Jake Heggie’s groundbreaking opera *Dead Man Walking* for Opera Pacific with Frederica von Stade. He went on to perform the role of Inquisitor in Opera Pacific’s *Candide*. He appeared in numerous contemporary and world-premiere operas and musicals. Off-Broadway, Mr. Manro led the original cast of Center for Contemporary Opera’s production of *Oration* by Line Tjørnhøj. On television, Manro appeared as Joel Lynch and Father Jackson in the European premiere live telecast of William Mayer’s: *A Death in the Family* at

the Hungarian National Theater and Opéra Grand D’Avignon which was voted “audience favorite” opera by Mezzo and TBS Network viewers. In Europe, Gabriel performed Doctor Bartolo (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) with Corfu Opera in Greece. His extensive repertoire and engagements have also included the roles of Bluebeard (*Bluebeard’s Castle*), Count Almaviva, Bartolo, Antonio (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Guglielmo, Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Don Giovanni (*Don Giovanni*), Die Sprecher, Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*), Belcore (*L’elisir d’amore*), Frédéric (*Lakme*), Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Giorgio Germont (*La traviata*), Schaunard, Coline, Marcello (*La bohème*), Valentin (*Faust*), Dandini, Alidoro (*La Cenerentola*), Alfio (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Scarpia (*Tosca*), Don Pizarro (*Fidelio*), and Superintendent Budd (*Albert Herring*). Equally at home in Musical Theater, he has performed numerous roles including Jafar in Walt Disney Company’s original stage production of *Aladdin*, Curly (*Oklahoma!*), Tony (*The Most Happy Fella*), Abner (*Li’l Abner*), Schroeder (*You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown*), Lank Sanders (*Girl Crazy*), Mr. Brownlow (*Oliver!*), Harrison Howell (*Kiss Me Kate*), the Governor (*Man of La Mancha*), and Emile de Becque (*South Pacific*). Mr. Manro next performs as Osmund in the world-premiere stage production of Siegfried Wagner’s *Rainulf and Adelasia* during this summer’s Bayreuth Festival in Germany.



Maestro Greg Magie is returning from the Central Coast to conduct the Cal Opera Chamber Orchestra, following his 2019 performances of *Carmen* and *La Traviata*. A pianist and horn player, Dr. Greg Magie earned his performance degrees from the Eastman School of Music, U. of Redlands, and UCLA. Greg made his conducting debut with the Redlands Symphony then later founded the Symphony of the Vines. He has conducted the Cabrillo Music Festival Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic, Pasadena Lyric Opera, Arrowbear Music Camp Orchestra, and led the orchestras at Houghton College,



S.F. State University, Pomona College and Graceland University. Dr. Magie directed the Pasadena Lyric Opera Chorus, Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church Choir, and Chancel Choir at First Presbyterian in SLO. Greg conductor and trained the chorus for this *Norma* production.



Richard Adamson (Director, Technical Director, Scenic Designer) - Rick serves as Resident Stage Director and Technical Director for California Opera. After receiving his BA in voice at Pepperdine University, Adamson earned a graduate degree in music theater direction under Götz Friedrich and August Everding at the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Hamburg. He assisted productions at the Metropolitan Opera in New York (*Les Troyens* – Fabrizio Melano), the Hamburgische Staatsoper and the Rooyal Opera House Covent Garden (*Der Zwerg und Florentinische Tragödie* – Adolf Dresen), and the Deutsche Oper (*Aida* – Götz Friedrich) in Berlin. He designed and directed productions of *La Traviata*, *Così fan Tutte*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Lakmé* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, for California Opera, as well as *Tosca* for Livermore Opera. He provided sets for *Sisters of Manzanar* and *The Barber of Seville* for COA, *Hansel and Gretel* and *The Boy Who Grew Too Fast* for Golden Gate Opera, and *La Bohème* for Opera San Luis Obispo. He designed sets for musicals and operas at colleges and regional theaters in Germany, the UK and US.

Randon Pool, Costume Design, Department Head responsible for all aspects of the Costume Shop, Randon supports multiple productions annually, primarily throughout California and Texas. As a costume designer for theatres, opera houses, feature and short films, Randon has also personally served as stitcher and craftsman for some of the largest theatre organizations in the greater Los Angeles area. Committed to support education, Randon also designs, rents, distributes, and alters costume pieces for use in classroom work and the collegiate and grade school levels. She has outfitted more than 440 performances over the span of her career.



Justine Prado Manro, is a professional stage manager and stage director in theaters along the west coast, including Opera San Luis Obispo, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and Golden Gate Opera. Most recently she directed Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle* and Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* for California Opera. Justine is also a feature and television screen-writer and comic book author. Originally from the Bay Area, she attended the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, and earned her MFA in screenwriting at UCLA. She writes for Emet Comics, and her graphic novel *Finding Molly: An Adventure in Catsitting* is currently available wherever books are sold. She resides in Los Angeles with her husband and son.

Casta Diva* and *M'ecco altar di Venere

Two of the most famous arias in opera literature are part of the score of this opera: *Casta Diva* for Norma and *M'ecco altar di Venere* for Pollione. As one of the premier examples of the Bel Canto style of opera composition, *Norma* showcases the way that coloratura (the fast, florid vocal ornamentation synonymous with Bel Canto) is used to express the outpouring of emotion. Bringing to life the emotional content of those vocal pyrotechnics is at the heart of performing such works. We see in Norma one of Bellini's most complex heroines with a personality reflected in the profusion of beautiful coloratura and lyric melodies.



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 *Jenufa*. 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 continues as Artistic Director for the San Francisco's Golden Gate Opera productions with recent features of *Carmen*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Suor Angelica*, *Pagliacci*, and *Hansel and Gretel*. She recently directed *Gianni Schicchi* in Romania and additional works in Italy. As founder of the Fresno Grand Opera and as CEO and Artistic Director of California Opera Association in Fresno, Ms. Garabedian directed *La Traviata*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Il Trovatore*, *Carmen*, *La Sonnambula*, *The Magic Flute*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and several cantatas and opera buffa works, along with many of Menotti's operas including *Maria Golovin*, *The Consul*, *The Medium*, *Old Maid and the Thief*, and the *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and *Chip and His Dog* for children. Ms. Garabedian has been 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. As an adjudicator for many major music competitions, she recently judged the United States International Chinese Music Competition and the Leoncavallo Competition in Italy. As a coach and master teacher, Ms. Garabedian also provides private consultations and masterclass tours, and her own private students have progressed to grand prize competitions and performances at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and Teatro alla Scala. 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, and English languages.



Margaret Hord, Choreographer

The Collaborative Arts: Bonding between dancers, singers, actors, visual artists, and instrumental musicians is what makes opera a complete art form. California Opera and California Arts Academy (CAA) join together to showcase CAA dancers through Cal Opera-tune-ities. Choreographers **Margaret Hord** and **Jordan Taylor** bring together the specialized dance and art forms that naturally fit with the opera arts. Special appreciation is extended to CAA Supervisor **Daniel Chavez** and to **Christine Cozzi** together with the **CAA Ballet Moms** for outstanding contributions to costuming. Additional collaborative arts involve the participation of students and teachers from throughout the Central Valley.

Margaret Hord, Choreographer

Margaret has choreographed the most beautiful and creative dance scenes for California Opera's many productions for almost a decade. She has had a distinguished career teaching ballet in Fresno and Clovis for 37 years and has been teaching at California Arts Academy for 13 years. Margaret trained at the Severance School of Dance, and went on to study at UC Irvine, the School of San Francisco Ballet and the School of Joffrey Ballet in New York. She served as Ballet Mistress for the Fresno Ballet from 1984 to 1996. Margaret teaches all levels of ballet including beginning, advanced, pointe and repertoire. Margaret is an American Ballet Theatre (ABT) Certified Teacher. She has successfully completed the ABT Teacher Training Intensive in Pre-Primary through Level V of the ABT National Training Curriculum. Many of her former students have been accepted into professional training programs such as School of American Ballet New York, San Francisco Ballet, Boston Ballet, and Pacific Northwest Ballet in Seattle. She has also had students accepted and graduate from prestigious collegiate programs, including Cornish College of the Arts Seattle, UC Irvine & Cal State University, San Jose Ca. and Princeton University Ma. She has had former students dancing in professional companies such as the American Ballet New York and the Boston Ballet. She currently has a former student dancing with the English National Ballet London. Margaret is the former director, choreographer and performer for Artistic Presence, a liturgical performing arts group in the Episcopal Church.

BELCANTO



What is Bel Canto? Opera buffs today use the term bel canto all the time. Yet we each seem to bring a different set of assumptions to the concept. In its narrowest sense bel canto opera refers to the early decades of 19th-century Italian opera, when Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti dominated the field. But the overall concept of bel canto started much earlier, with a consensus among opera enthusiasts that there was nothing more ravishing than a beautiful voice singing a beautiful melodic line beautifully, especially a melodic line driven by a sensitive musical setting of a poetic and singable text.

The technique of singing that produced the desired results valued smooth production, or legato, throughout the entire vocal range. Ideally, you did not want to hear singers shifting gears as their voices moved from low to middle to high registers. Also prized was the ability to execute effortlessly all manner of embellishments, rapid-fire runs, trills and such, the better to decorate vocal lines. So, the use of a lighter yet penetrating sound in the upper register was crucial to the style.

But as the Romantic movement took hold in the 19th century, the public taste for operatic drama evolved. Composers started writing works that demanded more intense and powerful singing.

The other historical dimension of the bel canto era has to do with the nature of the operas written for voices steeped in the practice. Since beautiful singing carried the day in the bel canto tradition, it was natural to compose music that would showcase such vocalism. For me the most fascinating element of the practice has to do with the approach to writing melody.

The melodic line is everything in a bel canto opera, not just in the arias but in the elaborate scenes that contain them. Those scenes offer long stretches of lyrically enhanced recitative and extended spans of arioso, a halfway station between full-out melody and conversational recitative.

As every opera historian will say, the problem in talking about early-19th-century bel canto opera is that no work from that era relied solely on creating longspun phrases of ethereal melody. Bellini was probably the purest bel canto master, but an opera like “Norma” is rich with declamatory vocal writing, fits of Romantic passion, fearsome outbursts for the volatile tragic heroine in which the soprano must summon chilling power and dispatch quick-paced lines full of daring leaps.

The practice of bel canto in its purest form had enormous influence on subsequent composers.

~ Anthony Tommasini, New York Times, November 28, 2009.



COMPLETE ACT AND SCENE SYNOPSIS

Act One

Oroveso leads the druids in a procession to pray for victory against the invading Romans: (Oroveso and druids: "Ite sul colle, o Druidi" / "Go up on the hill, O druids"). The druids pray Norma will have the courage to broker peace with the Romans: (Druids and Oroveso: "Dell'aura tua profetica" / "With thy prophetic aura, imbue her, O terrible God".)

Pollione and Flavio enter. Although Norma secretly broke her vows to love him and borne his two children, Pollione tells Flavio he no longer loves Norma, having fallen in love with the priestess Adalgisa. But he expresses some remorse, describing his dream in which Adalgisa was beside and a huge storm arose: (Pollione, aria: "Meco all'altar di Venere" / "With me at the altar in Rome was Adalgisa dressed in white, veiled all in white.") The storm presaged disaster: "Thus does Norma punish her faithless lover," he declares. They hear the trumpets sounding to announce Norma's arrival. Flavio urges his friend to leave, but Pollione proclaims he will confront Norma and the druids with superior power to overthrow their altars: (Cabaletta: "Me protegge, me difende" / "I am protected and defended")

As Norma leads the druids and priestesses, the crowd proclaims: "Norma viene" / "Norma is coming" as they and Oroveso await her. "The time is not ripe for our revenge", Norma declares, stating Rome will perish by being worn down. She approaches makes a plea to the moon (the "Chaste Goddess"): ("Casta diva" / "Chaste goddess"). She pleads that the goddess shed upon earth the peace that she has created in heaven. She calls for all to complete the rites. To herself, she declares that she cannot hurt Pollione, but desires that things return to where they used to be: (Cabaletta: "Ah! bello a me ritorna" / "Return to me, O beautiful one"). The assembled crowd accepts her approach.

Later that night: Adalgisa prays at the temple, remembering with some sorrow how she became involved with Pollione. He enters, telling her that she prays to a cruel god and is not trying to invoke the god of love. As she appears to reject him, he declares (Aria: "Va crudele" / "Go, O cruel one") but he is convinced that he cannot leave her. He is distraught, and she doesn't show she is equally torn, until the moment he declares that he must return to Rome the following day. He begs Adalgisa to go with him: (Duet: Pollione, then Adalgisa, then together: "Vieni in Roma" / "Come to Rome"). She resists, but finally agrees.

Norma's dwelling: Norma appears to be upset and orders her confidante, friend, and maid, Clotilde, to take the two children away from her, expressing very ambivalent feelings about them. She tells Clotilde that Pollione has been recalled to Rome, but does not know if he will take her or how he feels about leaving his children. Adalgisa approaches. The children are taken away.

Adalgisa tells Norma she loves a Roman, whom she does not name. As she describes how she fell in love, Norma recalls (as an aside) her own feelings for Pollione ("my passions, too, burned like this"), and more and more, their experiences of falling in love run parallel: (Norma and Adalgisa, duet: "Sola, furtiva al tempio" / "Often I would wait for him"). Adalgisa pleads for help and forgiveness, and Norma pledges that she will do that and will also free her from her vows as a priestess: (Norma: "Ah! sì, fa core, abbracciami" / "Yes, take heart, embrace me". Adalgisa: "Ripeti, o ciel, ripetimi" / "Say that again, heavens, say again")

Norma asks Adalgisa about the man she loves. She says he's Roman, and indicates it is Pollione who just enters. As Norma furiously confronts Pollione, Adalgisa is confused: Norma: "Oh! non tremare, o perfido" / "O faithless man, do not tremble".

Norma addresses Adalgisa. (Trio: each sings in succession, beginning with Norma: "Oh! di qual sei tu vittima" / "Oh, you are the victim"; then Adalgisa: "Oh! qual traspare orribile" / "What horror has been revealed"; then the two women together, followed by Pollione alone: "Norma! de' tuoi rimproveri" / "Norma, do not reproach me now", continuing with "Please give this wretched girl some respite"; after which all three repeat their words).

There are angry exchanges among the three: Norma declaring Pollione a traitor, he trying to persuade Adalgisa to leave with him, and Adalgisa angrily rejecting him. When he declares it is his fate to leave Norma, she encourages the young priestess to go, but Adalgisa says would rather die. Norma then demands that her lover go, leaving behind his children and honor. (Finale: brief duet, Adalgisa and Pollione: he declares his love, and she her desire for Norma not to be a source of guilt to her. Trio: Norma continues to rage at Pollione, Adalgisa desires him to return to Norma, and Pollione curses the day he met Norma.) Then the sound of the druids calling Norma is heard. The angry god, Irminsul, has spoken. Pollione leaves.

COMPLETE ACT AND SCENE SYNOPSIS

Act Two

Norma's dwelling

Norma looks at both of her sons, who are asleep. She considers killing them. Advancing towards them with knife upraised, she hesitates. (Recitative: "Dormono entrambi ... non vedran la mano che li percuote" / "They are both asleep ... they shall not see the hand which strikes them.") But she cannot bring herself to do it: (Aria: "Teneri, teneri figli" / "My dear, dear sons") The children wake up and she calls for Clotilde, demanding that Adalgisa be brought to her.

The young priestess enters, concerned at how pale Norma looks. Norma makes her swear to do everything she asks and, upon her agreement, tells her that she is entrusting the two children to her care and states that they should be taken to the Roman camp to their father Pollione, a man who she hopes will make a better lover for Adalgisa than he was for her. Adalgisa is aghast. Norma: "I beg you for his children's sake." (Duet, first Norma: "Deh! con te, con te li prendi" / "Please, take them with you") Adalgisa tells her that she will never leave Gaul and only agreed to the request in order to do what was good for Norma. (Duet, Adalgisa: "Vado al campo"/"I'll go to the camp") In the duet, Adalgisa agrees to go to the Roman camp and tell Pollione of Norma's grief; her hope is to persuade him to return to Norma. She then renounces Pollione: (Duet: "Mira, o Norma" / "Look, o Norma") They sing together, each expressing her own thoughts and feelings until Norma realizes that Adalgisa will give up Pollione and remain with her: (Cabaletta; Duet, Norma and Adalgisa: "Si fino all'ore estreme" / "Until the last hour")

The grove: The druid warriors gather and prepare themselves to attack the Romans. Oroveso enters with news from the gods: the time has not arrived to strike. Somewhat frustrated, the soldiers accept the decision.

The temple: Norma enters. (Aria: "Ei tornerà" / "He will come back") Then Clotilde arrives with news that Adalgisa has failed to persuade Pollione to return. Although Norma questions whether she should have trusted her, she then learns from her servant that Adalgisa is returning and wishes to take her vows at the altar and that the Roman has sworn to abduct her from the temple. In anger, Norma strikes a gong-like shield as a summons to war. Trumpets sound and Oroveso and the druids all rush in, demanding to know what is happening. They hear Norma's answer and the soldiers take up the refrain: "Guerra, guerra!" / "War, war!", while Norma proclaims "Blood, blood! Revenge!"

For Norma to complete the rites to authorize war, Oroveso demands to know about the sacrificial victim. At that moment, Clotilde rushes in to announce that a Roman has desecrated the temple, but that he has been apprehended. It is Pollione who is led in, and Norma is urged to take the sacrificial knife to stab him but, approaching him, she is unable to perform the deed. The assembled crowd demands to know why, but she dismisses them, stating that she needs to question her victim.

The crowd departs: (Duet, Norma and Pollione: "In mia man alfin tu sei" / "At last you are in my hands"). Norma demands he forever shun Adalgisa; only then will she release him and never see him again. He refuses, and she says she will then kill her children. "Strike me instead", he demands, "so that only I alone will die", but she quickly asserts that not only will all Romans die, but so will Adalgisa, who has broken her vows as a priestess. This prompts him to plead for her life. (Cabaletta: Norma and Pollione: "Già mi pasco ne' tuoi sguardi" / "Already I take pleasure in the looks you give me".) When Pollione demands the knife, she calls the priests to assemble. Norma announces that it would be better to sacrifice a priestess who has broken her vows, and orders the pyre to be lit. Oroveso demands to know who is to be sacrificed while Pollione begs that she stays silent. Norma then wonders if she is not in fact the guilty one, then reveals that it is she who is to be the victim: a high priestess who has broken her vows, has become involved with the enemy, and has borne his children. (Aria, Norma to Pollione: "Qual cor tradisti" / "The heart you betrayed"; Duet: Norma and Pollione; ensemble, Norma, Oroveso, Pollione, druids, priests: each expresses his/her sorrow, anger, pleas to Norma, with Oroveso learning for the first time that Norma is a mother.)

In the concerted finale, Norma pleads with Oroveso to spare her children, reminding her father that they are of his own blood. ("Deh! non volerli vittime" / "Please don't make them victims"). After he promises, she prepares to leap into the flames, and the re-enamoured Pollione joins her, declaring "your pyre is mine as well. There, a holier and everlasting love will begin."

IN MEMORY OF

California Opera remembers our opera family who left lasting impressions. These are among the many angels who worked throughout the years endlessly and enthusiastically to bring opera to the community:



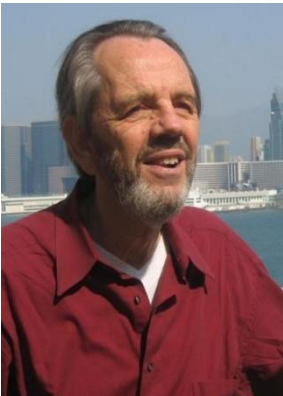
William "Bill" Yannuzzi (1930-2006)

Steve Wall (1952-2020)

Arsen Marsoobian (1934-2021)

Gloria Garabedian Taylor (1938-2011)

WITH SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF Thomas Henry Sonnichsen and Gertrude "Trudy" Elaine Hogg Sonnichsen, who were early underwriters of California Opera programs, garnering major support of the Exxon Mobile Foundation. Trudy's favorite opera was *Norma*. Their daughter Jamie Bonetto performs the title role in dedication to her parents.



Memories of the Executive Director, Dr. Diane Nixon

Steve Wall ~ Remembering the times we shared with all of these selfless people is so important to me personally. It was with Steve Wall that I sat in the lighting booth during our first production of *Norma* many years ago at Tower Theatre. I had so much fun kicking back with him watching the performance as he so effortlessly worked the lighting board. That was one of my fondest memories among many. Edna loved to share her reports of their creative ideas together. She was truly devastated to learn of his loss. One minute they were talking about his plans for this *Norma* production then she called hours later to say he would not be continuing this journey with us in body, but in spirit. We dedicate this production to Steve, who will always be remembered.

Phil Kimble ~ The most dedicated opera fan and life lover, Phil never missed a performance, always stayed for a meal after each event, and worked closely with each artist building self-esteem, making us all believe in ourselves and others. Phil, you're truly special.

Phil Kimble (1935-2016)

Nicola Iacovetti ~ What a wonderful man to work with. He was so passionate about the music. I will always remember the time we shared talking about every little detail of the opera world that he dedicated his whole life to building.

William Yannuzzi ~ We remember Bill expertly training singers and his graciousness with every recommendation about how to do things better. His loss was profound as he created a space in opera never again refilled.

Fred Schlotthauer ~ When Fred so enthusiastically brought all of his supplies to our very first Opera Guild meeting, I realized what true opera support was all about – offering yourself to help make ideas and dreams possible through ingenuity, commitment, and belief in the power of the outcome.

Gloria Taylor ~ As Edna's first cousin, she met with opera later in life, bringing an elegance to the guild through her excellence in baking, most genuine and beautiful smile, and exquisite charm.

Arsen Marsoobian ~ Arsen impressively brought leadership, gallantry, and class to everything he did. Seeing him walk into the lobby before each show, I always knew we were in good hands and everything would be more than okay.

Pat Gebbs, Roxie Jizmejian, Gladys Peters, Jeanne Durnell, MaryAnne Prody, Ray Ensher, Larry Bluestone, and John Donaldson ~ As the very first opera fans to call about an upcoming program, their good cheer, appreciation, and anticipation of upcoming events always made me feel like we were doing something right that had a lot of meaning in so many lives. These truly nice people touched my life greatly with their goodness.

William May ~ What a wonderful person and chorister. He always took the time to say something funny, cute, or nice to me, which would make me stop, laugh, and so much appreciate the people who worked so committedly in the opera chorus. Bill was to have performed in this *Norma* production, rehearsing with us just months ago. We dedicate this performance to you Bill too and hope you will be able to hear us.

FALL FESTIVAL 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.



Its a Grand Night for Singing: Doctors at the MET on December 3, 2021. California Opera's annual tradition of Doctors in Concert, this evening is designed as a ticket sale fundraiser, made possible by the outstanding performances of Fresno's very own talented Dr. Harvey Edmonds, Dr. Marshall Flam, Dr. Don Gaede, and Dr. and Mrs. John Ambrose. California Opera artists complement these savvy singing doctors in selections from Broadway to Bellini. The evening is completed by holiday opera favorites, and staged selections from Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. Tickets available at www.californiaopera.org

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: The return of opera to Fresno was made possible by the major support from grants administered by the Small Business Administration. 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, made possible in part by Conductor's Circle Donor Kaye Bonner Cummings of the BONNER FAMILY FOUNDATION, EECU of Fresno, Frank and Jamie Bonetto, Carmen Eanni of Miles, Sears & Eanni, Dr. & Mrs. William Podolsky, Dr. Harvey Edmonds & Carrie Boolootian, Drs. Marshall & Ximena Flam, and Dr. & Mrs. Stanley George, and Mr. and Mrs. Jack & Lureline Bickel. We extend special appreciation to Our Savior's Lutheran Church families, Daniel Chavez, Margaret Hord, and Jordan Taylor of the California Arts Academy, and Donald Munro of the Munro Review. Heartfelt gratitude for home hosts David Fox, Nadine Marsh, Bill Wolfmann, Bob Boro, Nina Manro, and Noreen Hass, volunteers in costuming, make-up under the direction of Sondra Sharitt, and most especially all the individual contributors, members, and businesses in support of the California Opera Guild under the direction of Aida Nassar with the leadership of Lisa Sanchez, Frank Vannini, Madeline and Susanna Esquivel, Alina Iriarte, Elizabeth Cliff, Shirley Rubiolo, Raffi & Deborah Soghomonian, Larry Barber, and Boris & Diane Nixon.

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

It is with your support, the sweat of our brows, and bones of our fingers that opera flourishes in Fresno!

~ Edna Garabedian