

## Dear Friends,

**W**ELCOME to another issue of *The Score*! On the heels of our runaway success with *The Nose*, which played to capacity houses and received some of the best reviews we've ever had, there are a number of exciting events, performances, and projects that I can't wait to share with you. Read on for details about our upcoming production of *The Bartered Bride*, a beloved opera that, in the hands of stage director and choreographer Daniel Pelzig, will be transported to the American Midwest while preserving the piece's deep Czech roots. We've also got a sneak preview of the 2009-10 season, and an interview with composer Zhou Long, who is working on *Madame White Snake*, Opera Boston's first-ever world premiere commission. In addition to staging the highest-quality mainstage performances, Opera Boston strives to provide opportunities for new audiences to experience live opera, and the Perkin Fund's generous support of our Young Artist program allows us to serve more and more children in schools and community

settings all over Greater Boston, all while providing valuable professional training for emerging opera singers.

I hope you enjoy this peek behind the scenes at the people and projects that help make Opera Boston the innovative and dynamic company it is. Thank you for your support, and I look forward to seeing you at the opera!

Warm wishes,

*Carole*  
Carole Charnow  
General Director



## Patricia Craig

**I**N 1978, *Founding Chairman of Opera Boston's Board of Overseers*, Patricia Craig, appeared on the Metropolitan Opera's stage as *Mařenka* in *The Bartered Bride*. Following her debut, Ms. Craig continued to perform for more than three decades, including twelve seasons at the Met with leading roles in *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, and *Mahagonny*. A faculty member at the New England Conservatory since 1990, Ms. Craig is a renowned voice teacher whose students, Barbara Quintiliani and Opera Boston ensemble member Sol Kim Bentley among them, have also met with success in their singing careers.

*How did you first become involved with Opera Boston?*

Winnie, Randolph, and Carole asked me if I'd be interested in spearheading the Board of Overseers. I thought the vision of the company was unique and something that Boston really needed.

*What is your role as the Founding Chairman of the Board of Overseers?*

To recruit board members, build interest in the community, and of course fundraising. I travel all over the United States and Europe to teach master classes and I am an ambassador for the company wherever I go. We have quite a few people on the board now and it runs beautifully!

*What is your favorite Opera Boston production to date?*

I have enjoyed a lot of them, but I have to say that *Nixon in China* (03/04) was my favorite. It's everything that Opera Boston represents.



Patricia Craig as *Mařenka* in her 1978 Metropolitan Opera debut.

*When did you first start singing?*

I was identified as the person making "all that noise" in music class when I was eleven. I was living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, when I really started singing opera at the Skylight Theater there. Jessye Norman and I shared third prize in the Met National Council finals in 1968, and it took off from there.

*Who were your influences and idols?*

Renata Tebaldi. When I was in junior high, we lived on Long Island and took a field trip to the Met. I heard her sing *Tosca* and was hooked from then on. Another big idol is Magda Olivero. We sang Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* in Spoleto, Italy, and in Charleston, South Carolina, at the opening of the Spoleto Festival USA. And then we were at the Met at the same time—I learned so much from her.

*How does your experience as a performer carry-over into your teaching?*

The lovely part about teaching is that I get to work with young adults who have a real passion for wanting to be opera singers. Some of them sing my repertoire, which makes it even more personalized. I

# Interview with Daniel Pelzig

Director and Choreographer of *The Bartered Bride*

**T**he *Bartered Bride* is Daniel Pelzig's first major project in Boston since concluding his four-year tenure as resident choreographer for the Boston Ballet in 2000. We found Pelzig in San Francisco where he is working on *War Music*, a new play opening at the American Conservatory Theater.

*The Score: In this Opera Boston production, you are serving as both director and choreographer.*

Daniel Pelzig: I love directing and staging scenes. In my career as a choreographer I work with directors who I learn from so much. As a choreographer I always felt the story in my gut. It has been a perfect trajectory for me from choreographing to directing. The only constraint on all of this is playing the dual role in the time allotted, but I am used to taking on big projects.

*TS: I understand that the opera will be set in a Depression-era Czech village in Wisconsin.*

DP: Opera Boston had decided to do the opera in English and someone on the board [President Emeritus Randolph Fuller] suggested that we set it in America. I researched how we could do that. The whole opening chorus is about well-brewed beer, so I thought, "Instead of making it a drinking song, why don't I set it in a brewery?" which fit well with Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Because it is a dancing show, I thought that the necessary length of dress for the women would make it impossible to set it in the nineteenth century. So I settled on the post-prohibition era, the spring of 1934. Researching the early Ringling Brothers and other small circuses that toured during the Depression era reinforced that time period for me. This will be a seedy kind of circus, slightly tattered and wandering with an American Indian and their bear. It is actually quite Americana and it is in the libretto that way. Plus, the opera is about a family who tries to sell their daughter in order to pay off a debt, but who also gives her a voice in the matter. 1934 came after women got their vote, so a lot of stars aligned to make me do it then.



*TS: How do you think your choice will impact the audience's experience of The Bartered Bride?*

DP: People might come expecting to get stock pseudo-comedic characters, but instead they will get characters that are much more interesting and independent. I stay very true to the story, but I also find the humor in human foibles. A traditional staging would have traditional Czech costumes. Since it is set in the Depression era, the costume palette is subdued, but the set will have color and become progressively more colorful. I think people will be quite delighted. It will be both charming and beautiful to look at.

*TS: Tell me about the dancing in the show.*

DP: It is a dance-heavy show; dancing is my background and I like to keep things kinetic. We have established a partnership with the Boston Conservatory, and are using six of their extraordinary students. Yasuko Tokunaga and Richard Ortner have led the Conservatory into an artistically profound period. This collaboration is very exciting to me. First, the students get to dance in a professional production. Second, they will not be the only ones dancing. The chorus will also be very physically active. I work with singers a lot, and they are much more willing to dance than people might think. I am playing with how the dancing is going to be used. For example, the end of act one ends with a Polka. I am making it a community night baseball game, and the vocal of the polka will

become what the people in the stands are singing.

*TS: What style of dance can we expect?*

DP: My background, before I studied ballet, is in eastern European dancing, so that flavor will be there along with social dancing of the 1930s. It will also be laced with a more contemporary feel. I always like to incorporate human gestures in movement. I love ballet training, but I also love a less formal way of moving, the way that bodies move in space with fluidity. I will use the dancing to tell the story, which is first and foremost what needs to be done.

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*(Patricia Craig continued from page 1)*

have the opportunity to share all of my experience, everything from what it's like to stand on the stage and project to where you really need to take a breath and how to pace a role—I know what it feels like in my own body.

*Tell me about your Met debut.*

It was like being Alice in Wonderland. The men in the production were major stars—Nicolai Gedda as Jeník, Jon Vickers as Vašek, and Jimmy Levine in the pit. Nicolai and I would stand on a ladder and hang a garland at the beginning of Act I. Then he was to move the ladder according to the Xs on the stage, but he never got it right, because he couldn't see the Xs, and when it came time for me to climb back up the ladder, I would have to

jump off the top step to reach the garland. My mother nearly had a heart attack in the audience. My dressing room looked like a funeral parlor with all of the flowers, and the biggest bouquet I got was from Teresa Stratas, with whom I shared the production. She did the premiere, and I covered her before making my debut. She was a wonderful artist and it was a magical time.

*What advice would you offer to Opera Boston's Mařenka, Jennifer Aylmer?*

I remember Jennifer as Gabrielle in *La Vie Parisienne* (04/05). She enchanted me. I know she'll be just as delicious as Mařenka. I would tell her to enjoy every minute of it, it's such a great score and it's a wonderful part.

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Ewa Podleś as Tancredi at Teatro Real

## Tancredi

Gioacchino Rossini

October 23, 25, and 27, 2009

Conducted by Gil Rose | Directed by Kristine McIntyre

Ewa Podleś as Tancredi

Yeghishe Manucharyan as Argirio

Amanda Forsythe as Amenaide

Born to musical parents, the Italian composer Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) began singing, composing, and playing instruments at a young age. He completed his first opera by 1806, and went on to compose almost forty operas before retiring at the age of thirty-seven. Rossini wrote *Tancredi* (1813) when he was twenty-one. Hot on the heels of *La scala di seta* (1812), a one-act “bedroom farce,” *Tancredi* was Rossini’s first major *opera seria*. The opening at La Fenice in Venice was a resounding success. Packed full of beautiful and memorable melodies, *Tancredi* tells tale of the unfortunate Amenaide who is disowned by her father and rejected by her lover, Tancredi, after Orbazzano, her vengeful groom-to-be, frames her for treason.

Opera Boston welcomes to its stage world-class Polish contralto Ewa Podleś, who will sing the role of Tancredi. The opera is rarely produced, owing mainly to the difficulty of the leading pants role, and Ms. Podleś is well known by opera aficionados to be its definitive interpreter. The delightful soprano Amanda Forsythe, last seen as Iris in *Semele* (07/08), makes her much-anticipated return to Opera Boston in the role of Amenaide.

## Madame White Snake

Zhou Long

Libretto by Cerise Lim Jacobs

World Premiere

February 26, 28, and March 2, 2010

Conducted by Gil Rose | Directed by Robert Woodruff

Ying Huang as White Snake

Michael Maniaci as Xiao Qing

John McVeigh as Xu Xian | Dong-Jian Gong as Abbot Fahai

An Opera Boston commission and world premiere, *Madame White Snake* is a uniquely American retelling of a treasured Chinese legend that has inspired artists across the centuries in genres as disparate as Peking Opera, martial arts filmmaking, and animation. The millennium-old story, an archetypal transformation myth, tells the story of a powerful white snake demon who transforms into a beautiful woman to experience love. The beautiful Madame White Snake falls in love with and marries the unwitting Xu Xian. When the suspicious Abbot reveals the shape-shifter’s true identity, tragedy strikes.

The dark prologue, combining singing and recitative, gives way to the soft and bright music that narrates Madame White Snake’s awakening in the first act. The second act evokes summer and passion with rhythm and fast-tempo dialogues, known to traditional Peking opera. The third act introduces the Abbot, a bass, who brings about the heroine’s tragic end. The world-class cast includes the Boston stage debut of Chinese soprano Ying Huang in the title role and the Opera Boston debut of male soprano Michael Maniaci.

## La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein

Jacques Offenbach

April 30, May 2, and 4, 2010

Conducted by Gil Rose

Directed by David Kneuss

Stephanie Blythe as La Grande-Duchesse

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880) is notable for his truly funny operettas, and in France he became the most popular composer of the Second Empire. *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, an operetta in three acts and four tableaux, debuted at the 1867 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris. The satirical plot tells the story of the spoiled yet charming Grande-Duchesse whose guardian, Baron Puck, devises a war to amuse her. A mad love triangle ensues when the Grande-Duchesse falls for Fritz, a handsome young soldier. A variety of appealing airs carry the knotty plot to its happy end.

The role of the Grande-Duchesse—originally sung by the great Offenbach soprano, Hortense Schneider—will be brought to life by star Stephanie Blythe. An awesomely versatile mezzo-soprano, since her breakthrough performance at the Metropolitan Opera in 1999 as Cornelia in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare*, she continues to wow New York audiences, most recently with her portrayal of Orfeo in Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* this January. The *New York Times* confirms that Ms. Blythe is “at an artistic peak.” Opera Boston is happy to welcome this important voice in American opera to Boston.

# Music Therapy at the Floating Hospital for Children

**O**PERA BOSTON'S outreach and education program continues to push the limit of what music can achieve and how it can reach new audiences. This January saw the launch of the latest initiative in Opera Boston's Healing Arts program. Pediatric patients at the Floating Hospital for Children at the Tufts Medical Center are participating in a two-month long program implemented by Lesley University Music Therapy faculty member Lisa Kynvi. A veteran music therapist, Ms. Kynvi uses vocal and instrumental music to help patients manage pain, reduce anxiety, and find an outlet for emotional expression.

To increase the overall impact of the program, Ms. Kynvi will train hospital staff to integrate music as a healing medium into their work with patients. Additionally, Opera Boston artists—including Perkin Fund Young Artists—will perform their signature show, *The Telephone*, during the course of the program this spring, giving the children an opportunity to experience music outside of therapy.

Rachel Adler-Golden, Opera Boston's Education Coordinator, and Emily Browder, who directed the highly successful Healing Arts program for adults at Tewksbury Hospital last year, collaborated with faculty at the Music Therapy Institute at Berklee College in designing the program. The future vision for the program includes a visiting Opera Boston artist to conduct Healing Arts Opera Shops with the children on an ongoing basis as well as a training component for Berklee Music Therapy students.

"Our goal is to develop a sustainable way to continue Opera Boston's Healing Arts program while deepening our connection to the community," explains Ms. Adler-Golden. Indeed, the Floating Hospital is located just steps away from Opera Boston's main-stage theater near Chinatown in Boston. Ginny Finn, the hospital's Child Life Specialist, adds, "We believe that this program will become integral to the healing process at Floating, and that it will be an effective tool to help our kids cope with the stress of illness and hospitalization."

## Zhou Long

**T**HE INTERNATIONALLY acclaimed Zhou Long has composed symphonies, choral works, movie soundtracks, and ballets, and has received commissions from institutions such as the Honolulu Symphony, the BBC World Service, the Cork Festival, and Wesleyan University. *Madame White Snake* is his first opera. "This is truly a new kind of collaboration for me," Zhou Long explains from his home in Kansas City where he is Visiting Professor of Composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory of Music. "I got an email from a friend in Boston asking if my wife [the composer Chen Yi] and I would like to work on an opera. We were both very busy, but I thought maybe I could work on it if were a small project." Zhou Long and Chen Yi met with librettist and project originator Cerise Lim Jacobs in New York City. They discovered that they were born in the same year, a fact that Zhou Long believes knotted them together in the project. As Zhou Long read the libretto, he felt that he already had the music in his head.

After Zhou Long and Opera Boston committed to the project, *Madame White Snake* quickly expanded from a single-act to a full-length opera. The composer and librettist worked closely together from the beginning. He gave her ideas for revisions to the libretto, occasionally asking for permission to move words and syllables around. They met with the director Robert Woodruff, who also gave constructive comments. Last spring, Opera Boston hosted Zhou Long in Boston where he visited the Cutler Majestic Theater and

the administrative offices. "I feel a lot of warmth and support from the company," says Zhou Long. "They have given me freedom and space to concentrate on writing the music."

Although composing for an English libretto presents challenges to the Chinese-born Zhou Long, he finds freedom and flexibility in the English language, which, unlike Chinese, does not use intonation, or variation in pitch, to distinguish words. The score borrows from traditional Chinese opera, musically and in style, with the integration of traditional instruments, but in general the musical writing is Western. At first, Zhou Long wanted to cast the role of Little Green, a transformed green snake who is Madame White Snake's servant, with a mezzo-soprano, but Chen Yi convinced him to write the part for a male soprano. An unusual-sounding voice, the idea of the male "between" role comes from traditional Peking opera. "I tried to make something fresh, something colorful, without going extreme...I've been told not to make it too avant-garde," Zhou Long laughs. The result is a genuine mixture: Chinese influences combined with Western writing and orchestration, recitation combined with singing, and an international cast of Chinese and American singers. Fusion is Zhou Long's forte. In 2003, when the American Academy of Arts and Letters awarded him its Academy Award in Music, the Academy stated: "Zhou Long displays a stunning (quasitactile) orchestral imagination ... embedding elements of the two cultures in a consistent, seamless, and original musical language."





Left: Winifred Perkin Gray

Right: Perkin Fund Young Artist and NEC Fellow Catherine O'Rourke performs in *The Telephone* at the opening of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway. (Photo by Clive Grainger)

## Perkin Fund Young Artist Program

**T**HE PERKIN FUND generously supports Opera Boston's Perkin Fund Young Artist Program, enabling the company to provide education, training, and mentoring opportunities for college students and recent graduates. Thanks to the fund's support, talented young artists have made great progress in their careers, participating in apprenticeships, Opera Boston productions, and outreach and education programs.

Opera Boston encourages and promotes young artists at all levels of the company. Singers have multiple opportunities in outreach and education programs, Opera Boston Underground concerts, summer performances in the city, and Opera Boston mainstage productions. A recently-formed partnership with the New England Conservatory (NEC) allows students to apprentice with the company. Designers and directors are also nurtured; emerging stage director Adrienne Boris directed a recent Opera Boston Underground presentation of Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins*. Stage director Eve Summer is working with the company this year as assistant director and stage director for *Little Red Riding Hood*, one of the education and outreach program's touring operas. Additionally, local college students fill important assistant scenic, lighting, and costume design positions in the company.

Opera Boston's Chairman of the Board Winifred Perkin Gray also serves as chair of the Perkin Fund. Her father Richard Perkin established the fund in 1967 and Winnie joined the board in 1972. In its early years, the Perkin Fund awarded grants mostly in science and technology, Richard Perkin's lifelong passion. However, by the mid-1970s, Winnie had secured the fund's first music grant, which went to New England Conservatory. "My family was very musical," Winnie explains, "and my mother encouraged us to consider grants for music." The Perkin Fund gave the initial large grants to support what would become known as the Perkin Fund Young Artist Program. "We [the Perkin Fund board] all love music and supporting

education is one of the Fund's priorities. Supporting the Young Artist program seemed like a perfect fit," says Winnie. "For the young artists, it's a step beyond conservatory training. Training them at the next level is vital for Opera Boston so that we have a roster of good young singers. We help each other out in that respect."

Each of Winnie's three brothers and her father was a pianist, but Winnie always preferred singing. She sang at an early age and went on to sing in college and with the Canterbury Choral Society in New York City. Winnie began studying voice in the early 1980s with Thomas Enman and later studied with Bernard Barbeau, both former members of the NEC faculty. In addition to singing in the chorus of several Opera Boston productions, she has appeared in the ensemble with Syracuse Opera and Indianapolis Opera: over 20 operas in all.

Winnie says she "came to Opera Boston through the stage door," by getting involved first as a singer, then becoming a supporter. In the mid-1990s, she began voice lessons with baritone Richard Conrad, the founder of the Boston Academy of Music. Conrad's invitation to her to join the chorus was the beginning of her involvement with the company that would later become Opera Boston. Shortly after, Winnie joined the board and the Academy decided to hire an executive director. "We interviewed and found Carole Charnow, who we thought was absolutely fabulous. We *had* to hire her," Winnie remembers. The Academy morphed into Opera Boston in 2003. "My feeling was that the company needed to grow slowly and with integrity," says Winnie. "My job as Chairman continues to be to ensure the steady artistic growth and financial health of Opera Boston." Opera Boston is deeply grateful for the long-standing and generous support of the Perkin Fund and the tireless efforts of Winifred Perkin Gray, whose dedication to education and the performing arts has enabled us to collaborate with hundreds of aspiring young artists.

## Stephen Salters at Boston City Singers



**W**HILE IN BOSTON for his critically-acclaimed portrayal of Kovalyov in *The Nose*, baritone Stephen Salters made a valuable contribution to Opera Boston's education and outreach initiatives. On February 10, at the Parish of All Saints in Dorchester, he led a 90-minute workshop and masterclass for the boys ages 12-16 from the Boys' Choir of Boston City Singers. He worked with them as a group on elements of vocal technique such as breathing, posture, phrasing and interpretation. Two students from the "Mssng Lnks" vocal program for young classical vocalists of color also received individual lessons from Mr. Salters, and other singers from the "Mssing Lnks" program watched the masterclass.

(Photo by Randy Goodman)

Frank Kelley as Police Inspector from *The Nose*, 2009



Photo by Clive Grainger

# OPERA BOSTON

& The Score

*Smetana The Bartered Bride* May 1, 3 & 5, 2009

OPERA BOSTON SEASON 08/09

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