1999 Season

Aria

Voice of the Hawaii Opera Theatre

HOT Norma

by Vincenzo Bellini

February 26
February 28
March 2
March 4
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“Be Not Ashamed to Shed a Tear”

By Jim Becker

Is Norma music’s gift to a dramatic soprano? Or a mezzo-soprano’s dream? A plumb part for a tenor? The top of the line for a bass?

The answer, of course, is all of the above. Vincenzo Bellini’s opera Norma is a treasure trove for singers of all vocal descriptions, singly, in pairs or trios. Not to mention the chorus, and the subtle and dramatic orchestration.

It is “bel canto” at its finest.

Richard Wagner, who was a hard man to please, particularly if the composer of the piece was still alive, said of Norma: “Be not ashamed to be carried away by the nobility and beauty of a melody by Bellini. Be not ashamed to shed a tear of emotion as you hear it.”

Rossini, Bellini’s great predecessor in the development of Italian opera which led to Verdi and Puccini, did, in fact, shed many tears at the sheer beauty of the finale of Norma, and reportedly leaped to his feet at the cymbal crash that accents the stirring last notes and loudly proclaimed: “That was not Bellini. That was God!”

Chopin, a great friend of Bellini’s, said the opera had an enormous influence on his compositions, and Verdi also acknowledged that. (You have only to listen to Il Trovatore to realize it.)

So Norma, first premiered at La Scala in Milan in 1831, has for more than a century and a half been one of the supreme examples of “bel canto”. (It got lukewarm reception on opening night, incidentally, and it was not until a second production at Bergamo that it began its triumphal march through the operatic world.)

Which raises that oft-asked question of what is “bel canto”? When the question was put to Rossini, who practically invented it, he replied: “voce, tecnica, e stile”. Voice, technique and style. That’s still pretty vague.

So is the translation of the term: “Beautiful singing”. That could cover everything from the castrati to Sinatra.

Perhaps the best way to define “bel canto” is to listen to Norma. Follow its long, sweeping melodic lines, its mighty stream of song, Listen to the sopranos singing together in thirds, reinforced by marvelous orchestral touches.

Or harken again to Wagner who once got out of a sick bed just to conduct it and caught typhoid as a result: “Norma unites the richest flow of melody with the deepest glow of truth.”

Norma was Bellini’s eighth opera. He was 30 when it had its lukewarm premiere in Milan. The tepid reception may be explained by the fact that the singers were so exhausted by rehearsals, and the great soprano Giullitta Pasta had demanded that Bellini rewrite her aria “Casta Diva” nine times, that they had to leave out the first act trio, one of the opera’s finest moments, because they were too tired to sing it.

A few months later, again with Pasta, Norma made Bellini’s international reputation.

The composer had his first great success with Il Pirata at the age of 26. His Romeo and Juliet opera, I Capuleti e i Montecchi (with a happy ending) and La Sonnambula followed. All are still occasionally performed.

And then came his masterpiece, Norma. Bellini moved to Paris, the center of the musical world, where he was lionized. But only one more success was to come, I Puritani, before Bellini, always in poor health, died, three months short of his 34th birthday.

In Norma, he left a work of great lyrical beauty that has attracted all the major singers through the years.

Among the musical moments particularly cherished are the priestess Norma’s hymn to the Druid goddess, “Casta Diva”, and the moving scene for two sopranos in the second act. “Mira, o Norma”, in which they sing one of Bellini’s most expansive melodies, first slowly and then, high-ly decorated, in the quicker ending.

The last part of the opera begins with a superb bass solo, then a stirring choral call to arms, and two great duets for Norma and the tenor anti-hero, Pollione, who comes good at the end, the first in private, the second backed by the chorus and orchestra, and ends with a beautiful and moving trio for soprano, tenor and bass—the one that brought tears to Rossini’s eyes.
Cast
(in order of appearance)

Oroveso Chester Patton
Pollione John Keyes
Flavio Laurence Paxton
Norma Sharon Spinetti
Adalgisa Linda Pavelka
Clotilde Vicki Gorman
Children Samantha Pang*

*Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus

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Assistant Chorus Director Susan McCready
Chorus Coordinator Phyllis Haines
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Dianne Boons
Kalena Bowers
Felice Brown
Bruse Eckmann
Ella Soto-Edwards
Randy Encarnacion
Kellie Gushiken
Gus Gustafson
Beverly A. Helmer
Linday Kajitani
Linda Louise Nichols
Andrew J. Nunes
Christian Peterson
Susan Polanco
Sarah Robinson

Soprano
Shelly Breneman*
Mary Chesnut
Ellia L. Edwards
Phyllis Haines
Malia Katrina
Kana‘aua Ka‘ai*
Blythe Kelsey**
Debbie Kelsey
Debra Koehler
Lutisha Kealoha
Manganag
Betsy McCready
Susan McCready
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Mika Potter*
Terri Seeborg

Alto
Hitomi Inki Baek
Sister Grace Capellas
Christine Ellers
Pamela Eliashof
Betty Grierson
Pamela L. Malava
Charlene Miura
Susan K. Nakamura
Marita L. Nelson
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Christin Walsh
Marcia B. Wright

Tenor
Makakilo Maka Ancheta*
Dan Barnett
Jeremy Blossey*
Sherwood Chock
Bruce M. Cushnie
Cheston Daguman
Phil M. Hidalgo
E.J. Manganag
Jed K. Omori
Carl Siberts

Bass
Michael Gallizia
Quinn K. Kelsey*
Kevin M. Loo
Kawika McGuire
Roger Petticord
Rhinehardt Puata
Les Rhinehart
Haigh Roop
Seun Kyo Sakata
Stefio Scordills
Sean Tyler
Michael Webb
Keith Yoshioka

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Norma
A Synopsis

Act One:
Scene 1

The sacred grove of the Druids.
The Druids have gathered, waiting for the moon to rise. Oroveso, the high priest, tells them that Norma, his daughter and the high priestess of their temple, will then appear to perform the sacred rite of cutting the mistletoe, and prophesy the future. The Druids hope she will invoke war against the Roman occupiers; they long to see Gaul freed of them.

When the grove is cleared, the Roman proconsul, Pollione, and his centurion, Flavio, appear. Years before, Pollione seduced Norma, who bore him two children in violation of her sacred vows of chastity, but now he has fallen in love with Adalgisa, another priestess. He tells of a disturbing dream in which Norma wreaks vengeance for his betrayal of her.

The Druids return and Norma performs the sacred rites. She tries to still their warlike ambitions. Her invocation of the moon goddess, in the famous aria, “Casta Diva”, is followed by her private thoughts; she still loves Pollione and hopes he will return to her.

When the sacred grove is again deserted, the priestess Adalgisa prays for strength to resist Pollione. He arrives and reveals he has been summoned back to Rome. She imprisons him to leave her, but finally yields to his entreaties to run away with him to Rome.

Act One:
Scene 2

Norma’s dwelling. To Clotilde, her attendant, Norma expresses her fear that Pollione will not take her with him when he returns to Rome. When Adalgisa approaches, Norma tells her attendant to take her two children, living witnesses to the betrayal of her vows, to a secret hiding place. Adalgisa confides in Norma: she is in love, and with a Roman! Norma releases Adalgisa from her vows and encourages her to be happy, but her generosity turns to fury when Adalgisa reveals that her love is Pollione.

They are both in love with the same man! He arrives and the two women berate him for his faithlessness. Outraged that honor, promises and his two children seem to mean nothing to him, they order him out.

Act Two:
Scene 1

Norma’s secret refuge. At night, as the children sleep, Norma approaches them with a dagger in hand. In desperation, she has decided to kill them, but maternal instincts win out; she is incapable of the deed. Instead she sends for Adalgisa and proposes that the priestess go off with Pollione to Rome, and take her two children with them for safekeeping. Adalgisa says instead she will insist that Pollione return to Norma and his children. In a duet, the two women swear eternal friendship.

Act Two:
Scene 2

The sacred grove. The Gallic warriors are eager to attack the Romans, but the high priest Oroveso urges them to bide their time. The moment to strike will come soon.

Norma learns that Adalgisa’s entreaties to Pollione to return to Norma and his children have been in vain. Instead Pollione plans to abduct Adalgisa from the temple and carry her to Rome by force.

Enraged, Norma strikes the temple gong. She declares war on the Romans, and leads the Druids in a vigorous call to arms. There will be a sacrificial victim to the gods of war.

Pollione is led on in chains. In abducting Adalgisa he has profaned the sacred temple precincts. The punishment for the crime is death.

Alone with Pollione, Norma first exults that he is in her power now. If he will leave Adalgisa, she will spare his life. Pollione is adamant.

When the people reassemble, Norma says she is ready to name the sacrificial victim. It is a priestess who has betrayed her vows. Norma names the victim—it is herself. As the sacrificial fire is prepared, Norma confesses her guilt. Recognizing the nobility of the woman he has wronged, Pollione cries, “your pyre, Norma, is mine, too,” and resolves to die with her.

Norma’s last thought is for her children. She begs her father to care for them; the innocent shall not suffer for her guilt. Oroveso consents, and together Norma and Pollione walk into the fire.
Standing on the steps of the Metropolitan Opera House earlier this year, I overheard the following conversation:

"How was the opera Saturday?"
"Great. We loved it. Didn't you come?"
"No, we gave our tickets away after we read the reviews."

True story.

Such a thing couldn't happen in Hawaii, of course. Or could it?

As a long-time (40-plus years) opera reviewer—okay, call me a critic—the thought appals me. As the singer Sylvia McNair, who appeared in Honolulu in 1983 in Rigoletto and has gone on to international stardom, put it in a recent interview: "Why on earth should an intelligent person give away such power to a music critic? Why don't people make up their own minds?"

Why not, indeed? And yet, when I attend a Sunday or Tuesday performance of opera in Hawaii—I always go at least twice, on Fridays to review and on Sundays to enjoy, and often on Tuesdays for an extra treat—people repeatedly ask me not what I thought of the Friday performance, but what I thought of the reviews.

Miss McNair is one of many performers who have given up reading reviews, although she says that isn't easy since her "fans" mail or FAX reviews to her all the time. She doesn't read those, either.

She says, and many other artists agree with her, that even in a review that is "99 percent flattering, the one percent is what sticks in one's head, and keeps popping up during future performances."

That certainly has been this critic's experience. Write that a singer is magnificent, marvelous, spectacular and the greatest thing since indoor plumbing but he or she might have taken the cadenza a trifle faster, and he or she is certain to explode, "that blankety-blank critic said I sang everything TOO SLOWLY!"

The great actor Richard Burton was among many other artists who never read reviews. He said, "the good ones are never quite good enough, and the bad ones destroy you."

Speaking as a critic, I certainly don't want to destroy anyone's enjoyment. Nor should I be able to.

Okay, I've seen maybe 2,000 opera performances in my life. Maybe more. (I've long since lost count.) You might have seen 20. Or two.

Does that qualify me to judge what you might like? No.

I've got my blind spots, too. Right at the moment, for example, I hope I never have to see Madama Butterfly again. I hope I change my mind, because HOT is planning to do it again real soon.

And I bring baggage. All critics do. I adore Mozart. Wagner's music gets right inside me; I can't think rationally about it. I love corny old Faust. Pelleas bores me stiff. I have no idea what is going on in Simon Boccanegra, although the music is glorious.

Add in the fact that we critics often don't even agree with each other.

You can perhaps bring fresher eyes and ears than any critic to every opera. You can make up your own mind.

And if you don't want to go as far as Sylvia McNair or Richard Burton, and ignore reviews altogether, you might do what I do: Put aside the reviews (our local reviewers are generally quite astute) until AFTER you've seen the opera.

Then read them and see if the critic agrees with YOU.

That's the real test.
After countless hours of preparation, the stage is finally set for a world-class performance.

Hmmm.
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Words from the Chair

By James E. Walker

It is once again my pleasure, on behalf of Hawaii Opera Theatre, to welcome you to another season of grand opera in Hawaii, this being our 39th year. Our presentations this year should provide a quality season with composers Giuseppe Verdi, Richard Strauss and Vincenzo Bellini.

HOT, along with all the performing arts, faces interesting challenges as we approach the new century. Hawaii has seen dramatic changes in economic conditions and social structures. Despite reductions in State and Federal funding and our current local economic doldrums, HOT has maintained its strong artistic position, high quality performances and has continued to develop its education programs.

But in common with opera companies around the world, HOT’s ticket sales cover less that 40% of the production cost. This combined with increased operating cost has created a financial bind. Prior to this year, our only major fundraising activity was the Opera Ball, which in 1998, was most successful. For the first time ever, we were forced to come to you, our friends and supporters, for a major fund drive to supplement our HOT membership contributions. Your continuing support is essential to the future of opera in Hawaii. With your help, both as HOT members and financial supporters, we can continue our exciting plans for the future, bringing grand opera to Hawaii into the next millennium. Enjoy the season.

General Director Welcome

By Henry Akina

Aloha, welcome to the 1999 season.

This year we are proud to offer three works which each in their way changed the course of operatic history, Verdi’s Un Ballo In Maschera (A Masked Ball), stems from one of the composer’s most fruitful and creative periods. The opera, due to its depiction of an actual historical regicide, became one of the most famous examples of operatic censorship in Verdi’s time.

Today we are proud to present A Masked Ball in the manner that the composer originally intended: set at the Swedish court of Gustave III. Matthew Lata directs and Mark Flint conducts an ensemble of singers all familiar with Honolulu audiences, who return to the islands to blend their skills to serve this fine work.

Elektra opened the door to the twentieth century in German music. It is the opera’s first performance in the Hawaiian islands, although most of the early Strauss operas have been performed here (Salome, Rosenkavalier, Ariadne auf Naxos) in years past. We are pleased to welcome an international ensemble of the highest caliber to this production headed by Janis Martin in the title role.

Norma, played in this production by Sharon Spinetti, was the bel canto opera that gave birth to romantic opera. Wagner, Verdi, Puccini and other composers of the day were fascinated by the innovative combination of music and dramatic passion that the young maestro Bellini conjured up in his Norma. We are pleased to welcome Conductor Enrique Patrón and Director Paula Williams to lead an international ensemble of soloists in the performances of this important opera.

These innovative works take us on an adventurous trail from baroque Sweden, to primitive Greece, and finally to druidic Britain.

Thank you for joining Hawaii Opera Theatre on this season’s operatic adventure.

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Great singers, Great Songs concert by students of the new Mae Z. Orvis Opera studio.

Heartfelt words from HOT General & Artistic Director, Henry Akina, on the occasion of the dedication of the Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio. The dedication took place at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, after a “Great Singers, Great Songs” concert by the Opera Studio participants on Sunday, October 4.

Mr. Bob Hines, Board member, presented Mr. Akina with a grant of $100,000 on behalf of the Arthur and Mae Orvis Foundation, Inc.

The Opera Studio’s mission is to train Hawaii’s young singers in the skills needed to perform in opera — training which goes beyond basic voice training and theater craft. “Hawaii has great voices...this is indeed a valuable contribution to Hawaii.”

Hawaii Opera Theatre ushers in its 40th season — and the new millennium — in January, 2000, with a production of Richard Wagner’s majestic Tristan und Isolde that the whole operatic world will be watching.

Wagner’s grandson, Wolfgang, Director of the famed Bayreuth Festival, and his wife and artistic associate Gudrun, will come to Hawaii to advise on the production, which will be directed by Henry Akina, HOT’s General & Artistic Director. Representatives from Wagner Societies in Europe, Asia and across the United States (including Hawaii’s own) will attend the performances.

It will be the first major Wagnerian event of the new millennium.

Tristan will be followed by Rossini’s imperishable musical romp, The Barber of Seville.

And HOT will close its 2000 season the way it began its first 40 years ago, with a production of Puccini’s Madama Butterfly — Hawaii’s all time operatic favorite.

Save the dates:

Tristan und Isolde: January 28, 30 & February 1, 2000

The Barber of Seville: February 11, 13, 15, 2000

Madama Butterfly: February 25, 27, 29 & March 2, 2000
The Music Continues...

HOT's 1999 Opera Ball Butterfly Ball
Saturday, November 13
at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel
6:00 pm

Don't miss the Party of the Year!

San Francisco Opera “Resident Singers” Concert
Tuesday, March 9, 1999
University of Hawaii at Manoa, Orvis Auditorium.
Four young singers selected from the renowned San Francisco Opera Center programs will delight us with a concert of opera favorites.

Keith Ikaia Purdy Benefit Recital
Sunday, April 18, 1999
HOT will welcome Hawaii’s own world renowned opera tenor in a benefit concert for Hawaii Opera Theatre. Mr. Purdy will sing popular arias and Hawaiian favorites. Music lovers are looking forward to this very special occasion.

The Hawaii Opera Theatre Chorus Concert
Sunday, May 30, 1999
The Hawaii Opera Theatre Chorus has developed into a world class opera chorus under the direction of Nola Nāhulu and Beebe Freitas. HOT is proud to present the chorus in their first concert appearance.

Be on the look out for further announcements and more details.

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'99 Aria 15
By Patsy Bunn

Opera friends and patrons owe a big “Thank You” to Anne Swanson and Jim McGuire for yet another beautiful evening at the 1998 Opera Ball. It has become a November tradition on the Honolulu social scene to don a glamorous gown or a handsome tuxedo and dine and dance in the beautifully decorated Sheraton-Waikiki Ballroom. The theme this year was “A Masked Ball”, and tables glittered with masks amidst flowers and shining candelabras. Guests enjoyed browsing and buying at the silent auction, with items generously donated by businesses and friends. Music filled the scene, thanks to the enchanting voice of Emma Veary, and after dinner, irresistible dancing rhythms of the Clyde Pound Orchestra. The dinner was delicious, the dancing was great and we can’t wait until November 13, for the 1999 “Butterfly Ball”, chaired by Jill Friedman and Jay Fidell — save the date!!

Berta Atherton, Betty Perry & Eleanor Sexton enjoying the festivities.

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Lynn Johnson and mysterious partner.
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How I got... Hooked on Opera

By Robert Wong

I actually saw my first opera at the Met in New York in the early ‘50’s. It was Madama Butterfly. I had taken a snap course in music appreciation at Cornell, and I enjoyed listening to classical music, but opera was still just noise to me. After graduation, I went to work for an architectural firm in New York. My wife was working in public relations and somebody at her office had two tickets to the Met they couldn’t use, so she bought them.

I remember they were two dollars each. We were in the next to last row of the top balcony. The stage was so far away it was like watching a puppet show, but we could hear perfectly.

That started us on opera. We began to go to the popular ones — you know, the A.B.C’s — in New York, and then in Hawaii after we came home. About 20 years ago we decided to get season tickets, and we’ve had them ever since.

That was a great decision for us because we get to hear the operas we know and we also see operas that are new to us, and we find the combination very exciting. We look forward to each new season.

The familiar operas are like old friends, and the new ones or the ones that are new to us, make a wonderful mixture. This year we looked forward to the Richard Strauss opera Elektra, which we had never heard. And we’re already excited about Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde next season. We’ve heard it, and we’re just starting to appreciate Wagner. We can mix a new experience with our oldest one, Madama Butterfly.
Let's Make an Opera!

by Lois Taylor

It was business as usual with any opera company. The chorus tenors insisted that one of the sopranos was flat, the second lead hated her costume, the business manager was nagging at the set designer for spending too much money and the stage manager kept mumbling, “we open in three days, three days.”

But look again. These aren’t adults, these are school kids, and they’re producing a genuine opera. This is part of Hawaii Opera Theatre’s Mini Residency Program run by Education and Outreach Manager Erik Haines, a program of cooperation between opera professionals and the schools.

Most recently, 15 high school and 70 elementary school students produced a 40-minute production of A Masked Ball in English. “The elementary school kids were the core of the production,” Haines said. The older students were brought in for secondary roles, while the lead roles were sung by HOT professionals and directed by Education Guild member Louise South.

“The younger students formed the chorus, trained by the HOT staff and Department of Education choral teachers. The kids provided their own costumes, that can be a simple as a sash across a T-shirt for a soldier to a suit of armor made from sequined fabric. They also design and make their own scenery and props, and run the administration of the company from publicity to development,” Haines said.

Several weeks before the performance, HOT begins staging rehearsals with the children and advising them on production techniques. The teachers have found that opera is not simply an elaborate music class. The story is based on literature, which they use in English classes. Frequently the plots are set in a specific historical period and include actual figures of the time, which makes them of
good use in social studies classes. And certainly the students use lots of math in technical areas of the production and in budgeting it.

"We use the entire student body," Haines said. "I have rarely come across some voice that has to be excluded. In that case, they can work on production. We had a real challenge last year with a couple of classes of kindergartners that were to be included in the show. The production was Aida so they dressed up as animals of the Nile and paraded in the Triumphal March. It brought down the house."

Wig Master Richard Stead teaching a make-up workshop.

Waimalu Elementary "witches" ready for Macbeth.

"It's a good program. It brings the faculty, the students and the parents together on a single project, all pushing in the same direction, and it works. The teachers tell us that weeks after the opera is over, the kids are singing the music on the playground. And a parent told us that she went to a little league game and sat behind the dugout. She was really surprised when team members sang a chorus from Macbeth as though it was a normal thing to do at a baseball game."

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by Jim Becker

In a season when the theme throughout the operatic world seemed to be, Bring on the crowds, nearly the most thrilling experience anywhere came on a stage with no costumes or scenery at all. Even people were scarce.

Billed as a "semi-staged" version, the Royal Opera House production of Wagner's Ring in London's cavernous Albert Hall made magic with minimal movement, making it clear that Wagner wrote every action and emotion into the music.

A V-shaped platform jutted out in front of the orchestra — all 110 of them, including six harps in a row — on which the singers simply sang. Conductor Bernard Haitink was the undisputed star, giving a rendition for the ages, and Stig Andersen was a tall handsome hero: welcome change from more famous Siegfrieds who have long since passed their sell-by date.

But almost everywhere else, from Seattle to Chicago to the Met to the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth, the operatic work was the more the merrier, big is beautiful and bigger even better. And the same for the scenery.

Often — but not always — this worked, too.

It would be difficult to imagine a grander operatic production than the Chicago Lyric's Mefistofele, which featured a bare-chested, stentorian-voiced Samuel Ramey as the devil. The scenery included a complete four-tiered opera house on stage, mirroring the real house in front, and at one point I counted 160 performers, dancers, singers and supers, and may have missed a dozen or so in the crush. The spectacle was riveting, cheer-provoking, and stirred fresh admiration for Boito's wonderful score.

Numbers were in at the Met, too. Franco Zeffirelli's church in Tosca was almost as large as the original in Rome, and he assembled such a mass of people for the Te Deum it looked larger than a U.S. football crowd. Nor did Zeffirelli spare the horses, mules and other livestock in his Carmen. There were a score or more.

The Met's Aida was heavily populated with animals too, plus sets that looked as if the entire Egyptian wing of the Metropolitan Museum had been borrowed for the evening. And several countries have smaller armies than the one that marched through the triumphal scene.

Oddly, Aida had the great tenor Placido Domingo in the pit, conducting, while the worst tenor in the world today, Vladimir Bogachov, was on stage murdering one of Domingo's finest roles. Go figure.

Again oddly, when numbers were really in order, producer Robert Wilson hid the chorus in the Met's Lohengrin in deepest gloom where they were almost invisible, and put his lead singers through strange slow-motion paces like actors in a Japanese Noh drama. Oceans of empty seats, a rarity at the Met, were mute evidence of the public's reaction.

Across the water, a student production in London's Queen Elizabeth Hall proved that small can be beautiful, too, and unveiled a young tenor named Peter Auty, who produced two glorious high C's, including one that Puccini forgot to write, in La Bohème. He will be heard from.

Back to the masses, rivaling and in the end even surpassing all the other big shows was Wolfgang Wagner's bitter-sweet Breughel-brought-to-life production of his grandfather's Die Meister-singer at Bayreuth. It was gorgeous; a feast of autumn color, and for the gathering of the Guilds for the last act's song contest it looked like the whole town was on stage, singing their hearts out. What a glorious sound! What a show!
Hawaii welcomes the 1st Tristan of the 21st Century

By Larry Lueck

At the end of January 2000, Hawaii Opera Theatre will present, for the first time ever in Hawaii, what many believe to be the finest example of the operatic arts ever composed – Richard Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde. The opera tells the story of an impossible love, a love which can find ultimate fulfillment only in death. That the opera contains some of the most beautiful music ever composed, is beyond argument; that it is difficult to stage effectively and expensive to produce are also factors beyond argument. In choosing to present Tristan to Hawaiian audiences, HOT has taken a heavy responsibility, both artistically and financially.

To assure artistic success, HOT’s General Director Henry Akina has assembled an outstanding cast of singers. In this, he has been guided by advice from Herr Wolfgang Wagner, the celebrated director of the world famous Bayreuther Festspiele, and the grandson of the opera’s composer. Both Herr

Wagner and his charming wife and partner Gudrun will attend HOT’s Tristan production as the honored guests of the Wagner Society of Hawaii and the “Tristan Club”, the latter an informal group of local people who have banded together to help promote and finance this very special undertaking. The Club hopes to raise at least $100,000 through individual member pledges and several “special projects”. The most important of these special projects is “The Convocation of Wagner Societies”, to be held on Saturday January 29, 2000. This Convocation will bring together delegates from the 121 Wagner Societies around the world, who will hear a series of lectures and discussions by outstanding authorities, all addressing the theme “Wagnerian Opera in the 21st Century”. The delegates will of course also attend HOT’s production of Tristan und Isolde on Tuesday February 1, 2000.

The production of Tristan will give local opera lovers, many of whom are unfamiliar with Wagner’s operas, a chance to hear one of his greatest works. It will also bring people from outside Hawaii – hopefully several hundred people – to our fabled islands, where they can enjoy both the musical events planned for them, and Hawaii’s many recreational activities. Readers wishing to learn more about the opera itself, or the special events being planned, are invited to contact Larry Lueck, the president of the Wagner Society of Hawaii, at (808) 373-5330 or call HOT’s office for more information.

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Artists

Peter Dean Beck, Set and Lighting Designer
Mr. Beck has designed the sets and lighting for more than 120 productions around the country. As HOT’s Designer in Residence for over nine seasons, his latest productions for HOT include Lucia di Lammermoor, Carmen, Turandot, Tannhäuser and Rigoletto. Last year he designed both Giovanni and Macbeth.

Mr. Beck recently designed La Traviata and The Marriage of Figaro for the New York City Opera National Company and has designed for Glimmerglass Opera for fourteen seasons.

Becce Freitas, Chorus Director & HOT Associate Artistic Director
A graduate of Oberlin College, Ms. Freitas received her Master’s degree from Boston University and studied at Juilliard where she was choral accompanist. Ms. Freitas has performed with such renowned soloists as Yo Yo Ma and bass virtuoso Edgar Meyer, and with the Tokyo String Quartet. In addition, she has recorded with Clarinetist David Shifrin. Ms. Freitas is currently a member of the faculty at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa and is organist for Punahou School Chapel, First Presbyterian Church and keyboard specialist with the Honolulu Symphony. Ms. Freitas has been with HOT since 1966, from 1984-1989 as Artistic Director.

Vicki Gorman, Soprano (Clotilde)
Ms. Gorman received a Master of Music degree in vocal performance from the New England Conservatory. She has appeared with HOT as Alisa in Lucia di Lammermoor, Kate Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly and Poussette in Manon. She was also in the HOT’s Resident Ensemble production of Little Red Riding Hood, and sings with various musical ensembles throughout Hawaii.

John Keyes*, Tenor (Pollione)
Some of Mr. Keyes’ recent engagements have included Jean in Herodiade with both the San Francisco Opera and the Opera Orchestra of New York, Erik in Die Fliegende Holländer in Nice, and the High Priest in Idomeneo at the Met. He also sang the title role in Parsifal at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, a role which he has sung to acclaim throughout the world, from Houston to Amsterdam. He recently debuted in Colon, Buenos Aires as Florestan in Fidelio and performed Turiddu and Canio in the New Israeli Opera’s Cavalleria/Pagliacci, Radames in Aida in Tulsa, and was heard in Salome at the Chicago Lyric. Mr. Keyes performed in the Beethoven Ninth Symphony with the Houston and Chicago Symphonies under Christopher Eschenbach. Mr. Keyes has been the winner of several awards and grants given by the Richard Tucker Music Foundation, the McAllister Foundation, and the Metropolitan Opera Guild.

Nola Nāhulu, Choral Director
This is Ms. Nāhulu’s seventh season as Choral Director with HOT and her twelfth season with the Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus as Executive Director. A native of Waimānae, she is a graduate of Kamehameha School, Whitman College and the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. She serves as Choral Director for the Pearl Harbor Hawaiian Civic Club and the Kawaiala‘o Church. In 1987 she was awarded by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs “Hawaiian of the Year” in the Year of the Hawaiian. She is president of the Executive Board of the Hawaii chapter of the American Choral Directors’ Association.

Chester Patton, Bass (Oroveso)
A former Adler Fellow and frequent artist with San Francisco Opera, Mr. Patton returns to Honolulu after performances at Toledo Opera as the Old Hebrew in Samson and Delilah, as Don Bartolo in San Francisco Opera’s Le Nozze di Figaro, Pizarro in Fidelio for Opera de Lyon, Don Basilio for Opera Pacific, as Timur in Vancouver Opera’s Turandot, and in the Opera de Paris, Bastille’s production of Nabucco. Mr. Patton’s upcoming engagements include his debut with Seattle Opera as Masetto in Don Giovanni, Capulet in Cleveland Opera’s Roméo et Juliette and Ramfis for Toledo Opera in their Verdi Anniversary production in 2001. Mr. Patton, who has extensive orchestral repertoire, will be performing the Verdi Requiem at Philadelphia’s prestigious Academy of Music and will be featured in Toledo Opera’s gala concert and Verdi Requiem. Honolulu audiences will remember Mr. Patton in HOT productions of Rigoletto, Il Trovatore and La Bohème.
Linda Pavelka*, Mezzo Soprano (Adalgisa)

Born in Montreal, Ms. Pavelka is a member of the Vienna Staatsoper and Volksoper ensemble. She started her career in Israel where she performed major mezzo roles with the new Israel Opera Company and has returned recently to sing Rosina in The Barber of Seville. Ms. Pavelka has appeared on operatic and concert stages in Canada, France, the U.S., and Germany. Her American debut was with the Seattle Opera in Britten’s Turn of the Screw. Her recent roles include Sesto in La Clemenza di Tito, Angelina in La Cenerentola at the Vienna Staatsoper, and Orlofsky in Die Fledermaus at the Palm Beach Opera. She recently sang Sheherazade by Ravel with Stuttgart Philharmonic to high acclaim, and received the outstanding singer-performer prize at the Berlin Festwochen. Ms. Pavelka sang a Lieder recital this summer in the Ravinia Festival.

Laurence Paxton, Lyric Tenor (Flavio)

With more than 30 operatic roles and a dozen oratorios to his credit, Mr. Paxton has appeared as Alfredo in La Traviata, Rodolfo in La Bohème and Don José in Carmen. He was a finalist in the San Francisco Merola Competition, and was chosen one of the 10 young artists of the year by the National Opera Associates. He has performed with opera companies in Santa Fe, Memphis, Dallas, Fort Worth, Des Moines and St. Louis. His HOT credits include Tosca, Un Ballo in Maschera, L’Amico Fritz, The Bartered Bride, The Marriage of Figaro, Candide and Camille in The Merry Widow.

Enrique Patrón de Rueda*, Conductor

The brilliant activity of Maestro de Rueda in the musical and operatic milieu has granted him one of the most privileged places in the cultural life of Mexico City. His deep understanding of opera has distinguished him as the best conductor of this genre in his country. From 1984 to 1986 he was Artistic Director of the National Opera Company and led many distinguished performances. From 1987 to 1993 he was Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Festival Cultural Sinaloa where he conducted opera as well as symphonic concerts, pop concerts and ballet. In 1991 as the Director of the Temporada de Opera Concieto he conducted memorable performances of Tosca with Mary Jane Johnson and Sherrill Milnes and Roberto Devereux with Vladimir Chernov. He has been Principal Conductor of the Compañía Nacional de Danza at the Palacio de Bellas Artes and has conducted throughout Central and South America. In Houston at the International Festival, and at the Europalia Festival opening concert in Brussels.

Sharon Spinetti, Soprano (Norma)

American-born Ms. Spinetti has sung leading soprano roles in opera houses all over Europe. She made her European debut in 1990 in the Verdi Requiem in Nice. Her Italian debut was in Catania at the famous Teatro Massimo as Leonora in Il Trovatore. She most recently appeared in Genoa at the Teatro Carlo Felice in Hans Werner Henze’s opera Venus und Adonis as the Prima Donna. Ms. Spinetti will make her debut this season at the Vienna Staatsoper as Mathilde in Rossini’s William Tell. She has performed in many German opera houses, as well as in Spain, Switzerland, South and Central America and throughout the U.S. as Fedora, Musetta, Nedda, Santuzza, Desdemona, Norma and, in Hawaii, as Violetta (La Traviata), Leonora (Il Trovatore) and Tosca. Ms. Spinetti is a favorite with HOT audiences.

Richard Stead, Wig & Make-up Designer

Mr. Stead returns for his seventeenth consecutive season with HOT. He has been Wigmaster at The San Francisco Opera, and his credits include: Netherlands Opera, Royal Shakespeare Company, Central City Opera, Utah Opera, Boston opera, American Conservatory Theatre, Bolshoi Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Ballet Hawaii, films, and television. He currently runs Richard Stead Enterprises in San Francisco.

Paula Williams, Stage Director

Ms. Williams’ recent engagements include San Francisco Opera’s new production of Aida and Francesca Zambello’s production of Ifigenie en Tauride for New York City Opera. Her directing credits at San Francisco Opera include Die Zauberflöte, La Cenerentola, and Andrea Chenier. Ms. Williams has directed new productions of Cosi Fan Tutte and La Perichole for the San Francisco Opera Center, and staged Andrea Chenier for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Ms. Williams has directed Ruslan and Lyudmilta for the Kirov Opera at the Metropolitan Opera. Last season she directed HOT’s Roméo et Juliette to great critical acclaim.

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