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   Larry Lueck

Aria

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My brief remarks on Tristan und Isolde must necessarily be subjective, because I wish to speak not as a musicologist or literary expert, but as a man of the practical theatre. My intensive involvement over several decades with Wagner's operas, and his concept of the Festivals, is what will guide me, not any aesthetic or academic theory.

Over the 140 years since the completion of the work, probably everything substantial that can be said about it has already been said. And yet, how can one really come to grips with so highly emotional a work as Tristan? Words and logic are not enough. The work still exerts an extraordinary influence on some people. Indeed, quite a few who hear it today, in this comparatively unromantic age, are still powerfully stirred, electrified, even overwhelmed by the opera. Many in fact are positively addicted to the music of Tristan.

I would like to emphasize how unprecedented a musical work Wagner's Tristan und Isolde was when first performed. It was completely new in the way its music and text were indivisibly linked to constitute one integral whole.

The singers' voices are often woven into the overall symphonic fabric and can scarcely be differentiated from the orchestral voices.

Even Wagner himself never accomplished anything quite like it again. The three-act structure of the opera corresponds to the pattern of day followed by night followed by day. Day—that is light—does not signify good in this opera, or anything positive; rather it is the Night—darkness—which makes light, and with it love, possible. Day, usually the realm of clarity and reason, is here perceived as deceptive and treacherous, while Night is the realm of truth and deliverance, upon which all yearning is focused.

This of course raises the question of whether Wagner's Tristan is a work of darkness and pessimism. Such an interpretation is indeed possible—but so is the exact opposite. Many hold that the work is about the triumph of absolute love, love in its passionate totality, the triumph of the lovers over the restraints and conventions of society. Similarly, many philosophical interpretations have been offered.

But there can be no single "right" or "wrong" interpretation; we are talking about a work of art, and it is as such, as a highly artificial construction, that should be approached.

Tristan und Isolde was born of Wagner's accumulated frustration, and of his awareness of his new creative powers. He initially intended to compose a comparatively light work, one which would be readily received by the opera world of his time. It of course turned out to be anything but "light work." Tristan is, in fact, Wagner's most radical work, rising from his desire to indulge in a burst of musical frenzy. The novice idea that he must have been very much in love to have written it earned only his scorn.

In the opera, drama was born for the first time fully from the spirit of the music itself. It is the music, with its very first chord that hovers between major and minor, that pushed open the door to modernism. Even 20 years after its completion, Tristan remained something of a mystery even to Wagner.

We should therefore approach Tristan not with false reverence and not encumbered by excessive learning, but rather with an open mind and a receptivity to our own experience.
**Tristan und Isolde**

by Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

in German with English Super-titles

Premiere: Königliches Hof und National Theater in Munich on June 10, 1865.

Performed at the Neal S. Blaisdell Concert Hall by Hawaii Opera Theatre January 28, 30 and February 1, 2000

**Director’s Notes**

Tristan und Isolde is considered a landmark in the production history of almost any opera company. The first production of this opera at HOT brings together some of the finest American talent working on this score in our time, and it is a particular pleasure to welcome this ensemble, led by Carol Yah, Gary Bachlund, Alexandra Hughes, Gary Simpson, and Greg Ryerson to HOT under the baton of Ivan Törès. We are particularly privileged to have had much guidance and advice from Wolfgang and Gudrun Wagner, who have patiently and tirelessly consulted on issues involved with this production. Tristan und Isolde is a stretch for everyone involved in the production. We are particularly grateful to the members of the Honolulu Symphony, who have made this challenge their own, and to the members of the Tristan Club of Hawaii Opera Theatre, who have shepherded the vision and execution of this project from its inception to production.

Tristan was not dubbed an “opera” by its composer. Wagner called it a “Handlung,” an action, in three acts. It remains one of the most fascinating examinations of man’s ability and need to transcend his own existence ever created by a human artist. The work creates its own tightly uncompromising musical language using a very explicit dramatic tale of two shimmering, yet star-crossed lovers.

Producing Tristan is a challenge for any ensemble and any director. In order for the transcendent emotional moments for the characters to become clear, it is necessary to develop and define a strict system of relationships between them. In the 130 years of the work’s existence, many systems have been developed, and the work is reborn each time a production embarks on a new definition of these relationships. Our production treats the relationship of Tristan and Isolde as a voyage of souls in time and space moving toward each other in an infinite process of union. Voyages are important symbols for many cultures, including our own island based mythology. The voyage of Tristan to Isolde takes place on a ship, omnipresent from beginning to end of the production. The ship takes the lovers from rejection, recrimination and vassallage in the first act, through the frustrated consummation of the second act hunt, until it remains simply a raft on a trajectory through space for the “liebestod,” which is the final transfiguration of the lovers. Embark with us in this maiden voyage of a great work here at HOT.
The Story of Tristan und Isolde

Scene: Medieval Cornwall & Brittany

Ireland and Cornwall are contending kingdoms. When the Irish knight Morold came to Cornwall to collect tribute, Tristan, nephew of the Cornish King Marke, killed him in fair fight. Morold was the betrothed of the Irish princess Isolde, renowned for her beauty and healing powers. Tristan, wounded in the fight, sails to Ireland under a false name ("Tantris") to be healed by Isolde. When she discovers his true identity she is about to kill him with his own sword, but stays her hand when they look into each other’s eyes. They are in love, but can not admit it, even to themselves. Back in Cornwall, Tristan suggests Isolde as a consort for King Marke, a marriage that will end the feud between the two countries.

Act 1
Tristan is bringing Isolde from Ireland to Cornwall to marry his uncle. When a sailor sings of an Irish maid, Isolde thinks she is being mocked. She tells her attendant Brangaine of how Tristan came to her to be healed. Now he is taking her to a loveless marriage. Brangaine tells Isolde she need not worry about a loveless union; among the medicine her mother gave her is a love potion. Isolde says she is interested only in the death potion. She sends word to Tristan that she will allow him to present her to King Marke only if he comes to see her. When Tristan comes, he senses the drink is poisoned but drinks it willingly. Isolde grabs the cup and drinks, too. As they wait for the poison to take effect, they confess their love with wild abandon. Brangaine admits she substituted the love potion. (It has revealed their love; not caused it.) The ship docks, and the two lovers struggle to regain their composure as King Marke boards to greet his bride.

Act 2
The King and his retainers are off on a nighttime hunt. At the castle, Isolde begs Brangaine to put out the light—the signal for Tristan that it is safe to come to her. Brangaine warns that the hunt is a trap to catch the lovers together. Isolde scorns her warning, and extinguishes the light herself. She and Tristan greet each other ecstatically, and compare the Night, the realm of passion and happiness where they can forget the world and life itself, and Day in which they are exposed to social responsibilities which separate them. From her warning post, Brangaine warns of the approach of day. As the lovers’ fervor reaches its climax, the hunting party bursts in. Tristan’s supposed friend, Melot, shows the King the lovers in each other’s arms. Marke begs Tristan to explain his betrayal. Instead, Tristan asks Isolde if she will follow him into the world of darkness and death. She agrees, and Tristan provokes Melot into drawing his sword, and falls upon it.

Act 3
The wounded Tristan has been carried to his ancestral home of Kareol in Brittany. His loyal servant Kurwenal has sent for Isolde to heal him. A shepherd keeps watch for his ship. His piping wakens Tristan, who is ecstatic when he learns Isolde is coming, but sinks back into despair when her ship does not appear, recalling his life of sorrow. Suddenly, the ship is sighted. Tristan deliriously opens his wound to greet Isolde, and dies in her arms. A second ship, bearing King Marke and his retinue arrives. The King has come to forgive the lovers. Kurwenal mistakes their appearance as hostile, kills Melot and dies defending Tristan’s body. Marke laments the death of all around him. Tristan has passed to the land of endless Night, and Isolde wills herself to join him in highest bliss.

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A Critic’s Choice:
LET’S DRINK TO

by Jim Becker

When it comes to excellence, the poet Ogden Nash wrote that candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker. And, he might have added, love potions are practically instantaneous.

Such potions figured prominently in this critic’s operatic peregrinations this year, back-to-back, and cross referenced, on one journey. One opera bore the title, Donizetti’s Elise or Love (L’Elisir d’Amore) and contains frequent references to the love potion shared by Tristan and Isolde, an event that Wagner was to set to music some 20 years later.

In the current season in New York’s Metropolitan Opera, Donizetti’s comedy and Wagner’s monumental Tristan und Isolde were offered on consecutive nights. (Wagner came first.)

Opera’s most famous and controversial couple (they have twice canceled on me), soprano Angela Gheorghiu and tenor Roberto Alagna, who met on stage and married shortly after to the delight of their record company, had the leads in the Met’s dollhouse setting of Elixir.

They are an exceedingly handsome pair, when they show up, and sing rather well, nice high notes and all, although Alagna’s role seems to me to be in a world of its own.

Not so the Canadian tenor Ben Heppner, who paired with the British soprano Jane Eaglen in Wagner’s epic. They are, too, becoming a couple, well-matched in sound and size; this was their second Tristan together after Seattle, and they are repeating it in Chicago, where it is also teamed with Elixir.

Heppner poured out a seemingly inexhaustible stream of glorious sound. He is a worthy successor to Vickers and Windgassen. Miss Eaglen’s Isolde is beautiful, with phrasing very much her own, but I would like her final pianissimo to float upwards like smoke from a dying fire. I feel sure that will come.

In the cast, Rene Pape was a King Marke to die for, and in the pit the Met’s orchestral playing, under James Levine, a marvelous Wagnerian is a given.

The Met’s production, by Dieter Dorn, is sparse, geometric, effective in dealing with very large people in his lead singers – their love duet emerges from the darkness as if it were two disembodied voices – and in spots too gimmicky. The rose red light that engulfs the scene when the lovers drink the potion draws giggles, and has to go. Lose the playthings, little model castles and jousting knights on horseback, reminders of Tristan’s heroic past, that litter the third act; they look as if Toy-R-U’s has sprung a leak.

Another romantic couple, or at least half of one, appeared at Santa Fe, in the fabulous opera house there, open on the side and stage rear to the desert sky, which I urge all to frequent early and often, for its sense of artistic commitment and ensemble playing, as well as the beauty and charm of the nearby town.

Highlights of this year’s five-opera season were a delicious Ariadne auf Naxos and a moving Iolanta with Jerry Hadley in fine form, plus a little-known opera, Kolman’s Countess Maritza, a sheer delight. (It played Broadway in 1926.)

In the lead was Kevin Anderson, who was Romeo to Jamie Rogers’ Juliette for HOT in 1998, and married her soon after. (That Honolulu moon is potent.) In sharp contrast to his dreamily romantic Romeo, Anderson in Santa Fe leaped up on the tables, donned rural costume (he is a real Count in disguise) to cavort with the peasants, then switched to white tie and tails to waltz with and woo the Countess. Oh, he sang, too.

Wagner appeared in Chicago in another guise, his Die Meistersinger, one of the towering peaks of operatic literature, a life-affirming joyous work, which the producer (Kurt Humes) perversely decided to set in what looked suspiciously like a Middle Western town (Peoria?) in the mid-1800s, a most unattractive time. Nevertheless, Gösta Winbergh was a winning Walther and Nancy Gustafson a strong-minded Eva.

Speaking of Wagner, who says he wrote no tunes? Many days after hearing Tristan at the Met, and after four other operas, two ballet performances, including naturally, The Nutcracker, even the Rockefeller Center Christmas Show, the music that runs constantly through my head is from Tristan. And long may it ring.

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Aloha, welcome to the 2000 season of the Hawaii Opera Theatre. In this, our 40th season, we reprise our original 1961 presentation, the timeless Madama Butterfly, stretch a bit to bring you the Hawaii premier of Richard Wagner's Tristan und Isolde, and regale you with the high jinks of Figaro, in The Barber of Seville. We hope you enjoy the entire season and that you will join us again every season.

I'd like to take this opportunity to answer some ticket policy questions we have been asked. Before I do, however, I'd like you to consider that we have at least three unique values to offer you when you come to our performances:

- The drama, musical grandeur and visual delights of quality grand opera performances;
- Excellent seats, some better than others, in a first-rate venue; and
- The opportunity to retain your favorite seats from one season to the next. On to the questions:

Why has Hawaii Opera Theatre raised ticket prices?

Hawaii Opera Theatre covers only about 40% of its costs by ticket sales. Grants, special events, fundraisers and corporate donations cover some of the additional expenses, but the most critical support comes from individuals. We want everyone to have the opportunity to experience and enjoy grand opera and we understand the need to maintain reasonable prices. With this in mind, we have worked diligently to make sure that all alternatives are explored before any increase is implemented. We trust that our patrons who are asked to pay more for premium seats understand that they are not only getting exceptional value and location for their contribution, they are also ensuring the survival of HOT for many seasons to come.

Why does Hawaii Opera Theatre require me to be a member in order to be ensured the same seat next season?

We try to locate repeat subscribers in the same seats from season to season. However, the better seats are always in demand. The privilege of renewal in the same seats year to year has a value to our subscribers, separate from the value of the seats themselves. Beginning in 1999, we increased the membership level required for the same seat assurance slightly, from basic level membership to associate level membership. We believe it is fair to give the value of same seat assurance to those who support HOT through substantial membership. Your membership in HOT is valuable to us, and we hope you understand our policy.

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by Jim Becker

Are you new to opera?
Or have you already caught a swarm of (Madama) Butterflies, or a bunch of Barbers, even a Tristan or two? Either way, you may find this quick guide to opera viewing useful:

1. Enjoy yourself.
   If Madama Butterfly makes you cry, if Barber of Seville makes you laugh, if Tristan and Isolde stirs your blood—and they all do those things to me—let yourself go with the show.

2. Short of shorts and slippers, dress to suit yourself.
   You will see some suits, a tux or two, cultured pearls, shell leis, mumurts of several lengths, neat aloha shirts. So no matter if you felt like dolling it up, or taking it easy, you'll fit right in.

3. Enjoy yourself.
   We're not taking our cultural pills or musical medicine.

4. Read the story ahead of time if you can.
   That's not always easy what with getting settled and greeting friends, but it can be helpful. (Of course, projected English Super-titles will allow you to follow every word.)

5. Enjoy yourself.
   It is a show; in fact the greatest show on earth, combining singing of a quality only few artists in the world can produce, orchestra, sets, costume, direction, acting, movement—the whole 99 yards. As soprano Barbara Bonney says: "Opera is cool—cool because it's important."

6. Turn off everything that can beep, buzz, ping or ring.
   How sweet it is to know that nobody can get at you until the show is over.

7. Open your eyes, your ears and your mind.
   They're singing this season about immortal longings, ill-starred love across cultural and religious barriers, and young people outsmarting their elders. (And our kids think they invented that.) Let yourself laugh, and cry and get stretched. Above all: Enjoy!

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Looking backward from the year 2000, I am struck by what has happened at HOT in the last three years. In this time period we produced four operas never before performed in Hawaii, founded an opera studio with the generous help of the wonderful Bretzlaff, Watumull and Arthur and Mae Orvis Foundations, also stabilizing many of our operations. Looking forward there is much to be done. The production of Tristan und Isolde marks the first time that HOT has marketed itself in a global manner, and we are honored to welcome Gudrun and Wolfgang Wagner to this production of Mr. Wagner’s grandfather’s work.

Yet opera production remains challenging in Hawaii. The effect of our economic climate on our work cannot be ignored. The substantial lack of government funding at the Municipal and State levels, a given in most other communities, and the economic pressures on our audience are substantial challenges to overcome. If we as a community can commit to nurturing and fostering opera and all the arts, we in Honolulu and Hawaii can set a beacon which will bring honor to us, and make a substantial contribution to the material and spiritual well-being of our islands.

Come celebrate the new season with us: The first Tristan und Isolde in our island community, featuring Carol Yahr and Gary Bachlund as the lovers; the romp of the ever popular Barber of Seville, featuring Susan Bruce as Rosina, and Jeff Matsey as the irreplaceable Figaro in a production directed by Matthew Lata and conducted by Mark Flint; and Madama Butterfly, HOT’s signature piece conducted by Mary Chun in a new production directed by Paula Williams and designed by Carol Bailey. Welcome to the year 2000 at HOT.
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Aria 2000
BUTTERFLY BALL
Highlights

For the first time in Hawaii Opera Theatre history, the Opera Ball had a waiting list for tickets! Jill Friedman, Jay Fidel and a host of incredible volunteers put together The Butterfly Ball, which turned out to be the special event of the year. Upon arrival at the Sheraton Waikiki, guests were greeted by Cio-Cio-San and Lt. Pinkerton (aka: Pamela Young and Gary Sprinkle), who were happy to provide a picturesque photo opportunity for anyone who wanted to capture the authentic costumes on film.

The Silent Auction was mobbed as party-goers bid on unique items that included everything from a year-long lease on a Jaguar, a trip to Robert Redford’s Sundance, designer fashions from Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Escada, to an original oil painting entitled “Waiehu Taro” by our own Pamela Andelin.

Even the “call to dinner” was designed to create excitement and anticipation with Taiko Summons performed by Kenny Endo and classical Japanese Dance presented by Senka Segawa (Mrs. Richard Hicks). How fitting that the true highlight of the evening was the breathtaking performance of Madame Butterfly excerpts by Yan Yan Wang, Jenny Akagi and the Hawaii Opera Theatre Choruses.

Afterwards, there was electricity in the air as the crowd hit the dance floor to the sounds of Clyde Pound Unison, Inc. To all there, it became clear that opera is HOT!

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16 Aria 2000
1 Pamela Young and Gary Sprinkle with Larry and Kiyomi Lueck.

2 Yan Yan Wang, Eddie Eu & Jenny Akagi.

3 Waking the butterfly from her cocoon, taiko drummer Kenny Endo.

4 Christian and Sally Aall.

5 Barber of Seville sponsor, J. Allen Johnson and Pamela Young.

6 Dr. & Mrs. Koh and Drs. Mary & S. Peter Kim.

7 Tom Huber, Pamela Young, Gary Sprinkle and Gloria Huber.

Shall we dance?
Yvonne Filius, Jeff Banks, Melissa Short and Larry Paxton.
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Model Shown: Johann Strauss

Hooked On Opera
by JoAnn Yosemori

When I was a senior at Farrington, one of our teachers arranged for a group of us to volunteer at HOT, painting the sets, and they gave us tickets for a dress rehearsal. It was Turandot, if I remember rightly. I was hooked immediately by the power of opera, and I’ve been going to opera every chance I get ever since.

I met Grant, who is now my husband, go with me, and now he is hooked as badly, or even more, than I am. In fact, he goes even when I can’t.

When we take trips we always try to get in at least one opera. Last year, we went to the Met in New York, and that was very exciting. At U.H. I did an exchange semester in London, and I saw several operas there. I saw Barber of Seville in Leningrad. I also saw opera in Japan when I worked there for a year, but tickets are so expensive there.

As soon as I finished college and got a job I started buying season tickets for HOT. But I haven’t seen Wagner, because I had to work when HOT did Tannhäuser—Grant went, but I couldn’t—so I have really looked forward to Tristan. I think it’s awesome that Wagner’s GRANDSON is visiting Hawaii, and I’m proud that our opera company is doing such a challenging work.

Where Are They Now?
Karan Armstrong

After singing Cio-Cio-San in HOT’s 1978 Madama Butterfly, Karan Armstrong became one of the foremost and versatile singing actresses on the European continent. She is noted as an exceptional interpreter of Wagner roles, including Elsa in Götz Friedrich’s Lohengrin production at the Bayreuth Festival. In addition to her Wagner roles, which span that entire repertoire, Ms. Armstrong has been lauded for her interpretations of Alban Berg’s Lulu, The Marschallin in Der Rosenkavalier and The Dyer’s Wife in Die Frau ohne Schatten, as well as Minnie in Fanciulla del West. She has sung at the Salzburg Festival; the Bayreuth Festival; Covent Garden; the Stuttgart Opera; The Amsterdam Opera; The Vienna State Opera; and The Deutsche Oper Berlin among many others.

Karan Armstrong holds the title of Kammersängerin at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, where she has received acclaim in recent years for her interpretations of Lady Macbeth of Mzensk and Katya Kabanova. She resides in Berlin with her husband Götz Friedrich and their son.

Opera Grows on a Gardener
In between opera seasons, JoAnn Yosemori cultivates another hobby she has grown to love, tending tomatoes.
HOT extends its most sincere appreciation to the following individuals, trusts and foundations, and businesses for their generous gifts received between December 1, 1998 and November 30, 1999. Their contributions allow Hawaii Opera Theatre to provide the highest quality opera and educational programs in Hawaii. We invite you to join our family of community supporters by making a contribution to HOT. For more information, please call 996-7372.

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Henry G. Akina, Director
Honolulu-born Henry G. Akina is the General and Artistic Director of Hawaii Opera Theatre. From 1981 to August 1996, Mr. Akina was Manager and Artistic Director of the Berlin Chamber Opera producing and directing most of that company’s repertoire. Some of his most important productions include Turandot (with Kent Nagano at the Opera of Lyons), The Rake’s Progress, Agrippina, Così Fan Tutte, Nabucco, and Elegy for Young Lovers. Mr. Akina’s HOT debut was the 1993 production of Puccini’s Madama Butterfly. In 1997 he directed Tosca and the following year, Macbeth. Last year, his direction of Elektra was highly acclaimed.

Gary Bachlund, Tenor (Tristan)
Mr. Bachlund is making his HOT debut in this production. He has sung in houses including the Metropolitan Opera; Los Angeles Opera; San Francisco Opera; Florentine Opera; Minnesota Opera; Dallas Opera; Arizona Opera; and Washington Opera. His European principal performances at the Colone Opera, Frankfurt Opera, Royal Opera and the Paris Opera have consistently garnered him rave reviews. In addition, Mr. Bachlund is well known for his solo work with the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, American Symphony at Carnegie Hall and the Tokyo Symphony, to name a few. Recent roles include: Tristan (Tristan und Isolde); Tannhäuser (Tannhäuser); Siegmund (Die Walküre); Parsifal; Erik (Der Fliegende Holländer); Froh (Das Rheingold) and Bacchus (Ariadne auf Naxos).

Peter Dean Beck,
Set & 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 ten seasons, his latest productions for HOT include Carmen, Turandot, Tannhäuser, Rigoletto, and last year’s Elektra and Norma. Mr. Beck recently designed La Traviata and The Marriage of Figaro for the New York City Opera National Company and designed for Glimmerglass Opera for thirteen seasons.

Les Ceballos, Lyric Tenor (Shepherd and Steersman)
Mr. Ceballos has sung numerous comprimario roles with HOT since 1984, including the Steersman in The Flying Dutchman, the Italian Tenor in Der Rosenkavalier and Remendado in Carmen. In 1997 he sang Malcolm in Macbeth and last year, he sang the Young Servant in Elektra. He sings with the HOT chorus, the Hawaii Chamber Orchestra and the Bach Chamber Choir, frequently as an oratorio soloist. Mr. Ceballos is an arranger of choral music and serves as Director of the Bishop Memorial Choir. He is on the faculty of Kamehameha Schools teaching choral music.

Beebe Freitas,
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, Bass Virtuoso Edgar Meyer, and with the Tokyo String Quartet. She has recorded with clarinetist David Shifrin. Ms. Freitas is currently a member of the faculty at the University of Hawaii and has been with HOT since 1966, from 1984-89 as Artistic Director.

Michael J. Galizia,
Bass Baritone (Steersman)
Mike Galizia is from Deer Park, New York and is currently on active duty as an Information Systems Security Manager in the Navy. He has extensive choral experience, having sung in opera choruses throughout the country and with HOT since 1997.

Alexandra Hughes,
Mezzo-Soprano (Brangâne)
Alexandra Hughes, a native New Yorker, has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe with such leading companies as San Francisco Opera (two Ring Cycles), Seattle Opera (five Ring Cycles), Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, Dallas Opera (their Ring Cycle), Canadian Opera Company and in Europe at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, among others. Ms. Hughes, who specializes in the German repertoire, recently performed several roles with James Conlon in Wagner’s Die Götterdämmerung. Last season she made her Carnegie Hall debut in Mahler’s Eighth Symphony. She’s a graduate of the Juilliard School of Music.
Quinn K. Kelsey, Bass-Baritone (Melot)
Mr. Kelsey made his HOT main season debut in 1997 in the comprimario role of the Servant in Macbeth. Last year he sang Silvano in A Masked Ball. Mr. Kelsey is an alumnus of Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus and University High School. He is currently a senior at the University of Hawaii-Manoa studying vocal music. He will be heard this season as Yamadori in Madama Butterfly.

Susan McCreary,
Assistant Chorus Director
Ms. McCreary, Honolulu-born and raised, attended Gettysburg College for an under-graduate degree in Spanish followed by graduate work at Westminster Choir College. She has sung with leading orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony and the Orchestra of St. Luke’s.

Nola Nāhulu, Choral Director
This is Ms. Nāhulu’s eighth season as Choral Director with HOT and her thirteenth season with Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus as Executive Director. A native of Waimanalo, she is a graduate of Kamehameha Schools, Whitman College and the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She serves as Choral Director for the Pearl Harbor Hawaiian Civic Club and the Kawaiaha’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.

Gary Simpson, Baritone (Kurwenal)
American baritone Gary Simpson is one of HOT’s favorite performers, having appeared here in Aida, Rigoletto and Il Trovatore. Kurwenal will be his first Wagner role in Hawaii. However, the role is hardly new to him, as he covered the part in recent Seattle and San Francisco Opera productions of Tristan. In 1997, he was a last-minute replacement for Samuel Ramey in Opera Orchestra’s Carnegie Hall production of Jerusalem, and received many accolades for his performance.

Richard Stead,
Wig & Make-up Designer
Mr. Stead returns for his eighteenth 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 recently finished working with Marcel Marceau on his world tour.

Ivan Törzs, Conductor
Maestro Törzs returns to Hawaii after his highly acclaimed orchestral leadership in last year’s production of Elektra. Maestro Törzs is the General Music Director of the Mecklenburg State Theatre in Schwerin, Germany, and also became the Artistic Director in 1999. Maestro Törzs has conducted in many major European opera houses including the Vienna State Opera, the Hamburg Opera, and the Theaters of Stuttgart, Budapest and Prague. He recently made a very successful Moscow debut with the Russian National Orchestra. When not on the podium, he is in demand as a pianist and has given Lieder recitals with such artists as Kurt Moll, Theo Adam and Edda Moser. He made his HOT debut in 1997 conducting Verdi’s Macbeth.

Carol Yahr, Soprano (Isolde)
Ms. Yahr began her professional career in 1987 as a mezzo-soprano, and in two years made her debut as a soprano at the Seattle Opera. She has emerged in recent seasons as an important Wagnerian dramatic soprano. In 1998, she performed at the Bastille as Isolde in a new production of Tristan und Isolde under James Conlon and then performed Isolde for the Washington Opera and in Copenhagen. She sang her first Walküre Brunnhilde in Wiesbaden. She went on to appear as Brunnhilde in the complete Ring at the Berlin State Opera under Daniel Barenboim. For the 1999/2000 season, after she performs in Honolulu, she travels to Prague for a new staging of Tristan under Jiri Kout.
Richard Wagner (1813-1883): An Appreciation
by Alan Bunin, Music Director, Hawaii Public Radio

Wagner is not easy listening. He doesn’t charm us the way Mozart does with those perfectly-tuned musical phrases. The word “quint” doesn’t exactly spring to mind when thinking about a character or situation or even a melody in a Wagner opera. Our impressions of Wagner are more likely couched in terms like “heroic,” “momentous,” “weighty,” or “epic proportions”...terms that could also describe the stereotypical Wagner singer. The contemporary notion of “less is more” would have been inconceivable to Wagner. He was after all, the very embodiment of what we think of as well, “Wagnerian.”

When we confront a work by Wagner, we are encountering a true musical titan. Wagner created a revolution in the realm of opera parallel to what Beethoven had accomplished in instrumental music. For Wagner, Beethoven was not just a historical figure. Wagner was 14 years old when Beethoven died; Beethoven’s “Ninth” was the “modern music” of Wagner’s youth. Beethoven, a child of revolutionary times, had unleashed a revolution in music by intensifying and integrating its intellectual and emotional elements, magnifying the Classical forms of the symphony, the string quartet and the concerto—bequeathed to him by Haydn and Mozart at the end of the 18th century—into vessels of unprecedented powers of expression. For Wagner, Beethoven’s legacy was his birthright. By the latter half of the 19th century, Wagner and his contemporaries, Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt, had carried out their own musical revolution, forging a musical creed referred to as the “Music of the Future.” Wagner and his circle responded to Beethoven’s challenge by not challenging his supremacy in the Classical forms. Instead, they declared those forms to be essentially dead—despite the fact that most composers continued to use them—and responded to Beethoven by creating music where expression itself was paramount, freed from the confines of the traditional models. Wagner’s genius found its voice in the realm of music-dramas, and the world of opera was never to be the same. Love him or hate him, there is no denying the overwhelming power of his mind, his imagination and vision, the magnitude of his towering achievements and the magnificence of the best of his music.

Wagner’s continuation of Beethoven’s revolution took music further along the evolutionary scale, composing works of unprecedented passion and drama, enlarging the instrumental forces to create new sonorities, with corresponding increase in the sheer volume of sound. The symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler were the spiritual descendants of the music of Wagner, as were the tone-poems and operas of Richard Strauss. Wagner’s harmonic ideas, which came to full flower in Tristan Und Isolde, pointed the way to atonal and 12-tone music of the 20th century, as epitomized in the music of Schoenberg and his disciples. But, it could be argued that Wagner’s most significant and lasting influence on composers of subsequent generations can be found in music written for that uniquely 20th century convergence of light, sound, and dramatic narrative, i.e. in film scores. John Williams’ music for the ongoing Star Wars epic (a late 20th century analogy to Wagner’s Ring Cycle), would not have been possible without Wagner’s example, with its extensive use of Wagnerian leitmotifs—themes used to represent characters, objects, feelings, and settings.

Wagner’s life was the stuff of opera itself...or, more appropriately, soap opera. He was born in Leipzig on May 22, 1813, to Johann and Carl Friedrich Wagner. Carl Friedrich, a police registrar, died when Richard was six months old.

Wagner married for the first time at the age of 23 to an actress named Minna Planer. Their marriage was an on-again, off-again affair...with affair being the operative word for both partners. In 1864, Wagner met Cosima von Bülow, the wife of his greatest musical champion, the conductor Hans von Bülow, and the daughter of Franz Liszt. She became his longtime mistress. Wagner and Cosima had 3 children together—Isolde in 1865, Eva in 1867, and Siegfried in 1869—before Cosima obtained her divorce from von Bülow. She and Richard were finally married in 1870.

Wagner was often in debt, and even spent some time in debtor’s prison. He also became involved in political movements, and was forced to flee Dresden in 1849 after participating in an uprising, settling in Zurich, and then in Venice. The Saxon authorities pressured Venice to expel him and in 1859, he took refuge in Lucerne, which is where he completed his opera Tristan und Isolde. He was finally granted amnesty in 1860, and returned to his beloved German soil for the first time in 11 years.

Even after he had established himself as a great composer, his fortunes continued to rise and fall. His greatest triumph came in 1876, when he realized his dream: the complete cycle of the four operas comprising The Ring of the Nibelungs was produced at the new theater that he himself had built to stage them in Bayreuth. Wagner died in Cosima’s arms of a massive heart attack on February 13, 1883, while visiting Venice. He was interred in a vault on the grounds of his villa in Bayreuth.
Among the "star" participants in the festivities, called TRISTAN-2000:

- Both Wagners;
- Josef Lienhart, president of the Richard Wagner Verband International, the umbrella organization for the nearly 200 Wagner Societies worldwide;
- Bryan Magee, British philosopher, TV presenter and outstanding teacher, author of what many consider the best book ever written on Wagner;
- Patrick J. Smith, editor-at-large of Opera News, the world's leading opera magazine;
- Martin Bernheimer, America's leading music critic, with a worldwide audience, who is also a frequent moderator of the Metropolitan Opera intermission quiz;
- Guenther Schneider-Siemssen, for more than 30 years one of the world's foremost opera designers, whose works include the current Ring Cycle at the Metropolitan Opera in New York;
- Janis Martin, a celebrated Wagnerian soprano at Bayreuth and other major houses, who sang Elektra for HOT last season;
- Simon Williams, drama professor and noted lecturer on Wagner as dramatist at Bayreuth and elsewhere, and author of a highly regarded book on Wagner's theatrical art;
- Ivan Törzs, HOT's Tristan conductor, who heads the Mecklenburg Opera in Germany and Brian Masuda, a European-based pianist.

Summing up at the Convocation are Jim Becker, editor of Aria and HOT opera previewer, and Henry Akina, HOT's General and Artistic Director.

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Hawaii. Just the word conjures up visions of swaying palm trees, white sandy beaches and exotic beauties dancing the hula. Is this enough to attract sophisticated visitors? Arent people looking for more? The images are powerful but as travel becomes easier, and people have more options, Hawaii must learn to compete in a new arena. Hawaii Opera Theatre (HOT) has been presenting world-class opera for over forty years. Its time to get the word out!

In 1998, HOT took a bold step towards promoting Oahu as more than just an island with another pretty beach. HOT joined ten other organizations to create Arts With Aloha, a public relations committee whose sole purpose is to promote culture and the arts in Hawaii. By pooling resources, the committee successfully launched a campaign to present Hawaii as a cultural mecca where one-of-a-kind exhibits are unveiled, famous artists give lectures and super stars kick off world tours.

Arts With Aloha is comprised of executives representing several museums, galleries and theatres in Hawaii. They work closely with the Oahu Visitors Bureau and the Hawaii Tourism Authority in an effort to reach a wide variety of audiences. HOT participates in numerous presentations at functions throughout the year which have included everything from the Good Life Expo to programs designed for the travel industry to members of the international media.

HOT's staff and professional performers also assist Arts With Aloha committee with press trips. Visiting travel writers from publications such as Conde Nast, San Francisco Examiner and Westways Magazine, to name a few, have been invited to visit Oahu's museums, galleries and theatres. Special tours are arranged and the writers have the opportunity to interview local artists and performers.

HOT has also worked to encourage the partnership of the visitor industry! Several hotels have agreed to support Arts With Aloha by providing lodging, meals and activities for many of the participating writers. Finally, the media is beginning to view, and more importantly present, Hawaii as a true cultural arts destination.

Sneak Peak at What's HOT

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*Marriage of Figaro*
by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
February 16, 18 and 20

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by Pietro Mascagni
& Pagliacci
by Ruggero Leoncavallo
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