

Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* Highlights Season

Annapolis Opera's fully staged opera this season is Mozart's hilarious comic opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, one of the world's most beloved operas. Joining Maestro Ron Gretz and the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra will be an all-star cast of singers in performances at Maryland Hall on Friday, March 11, at 8 p.m. and Sunday, March 13 at 3 p.m.

Commissioned by Emperor Joseph II to compose an opera for the Burgtheater in Vienna, Mozart turned for inspiration to Pierre Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of*



Figaro, a controversial comedy that had been banned in Vienna because of its satirical portrayal of the aristocracy. Mozart asked Lorenzo Da Ponte to write the libretto and his more subtle lampooning of the aristocracy passed muster with the emperor.

The Marriage of Figaro picks up the story of Figaro midway through the narrative originally laid out in Beaumarchais trilogy of books. The story from the first book, *The*

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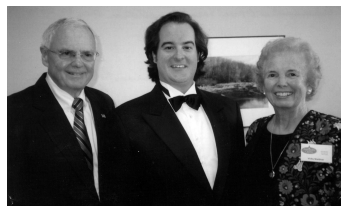
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23rd Annual Vocal Competition

Submissions are arriving daily from aspiring opera singers hoping for a place in Annapolis Opera's 23rd Annual Vocal Competition. At 2:00 pm on April 10, at Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, the public will be invited to what promises to be a reprise of last year's stunning finals program. Not only will the audience thrill to the young performers' superb voices and acting skills, they will savor the excitement and drama generated as the finalists vie with one another for the coveted prizes.

That all this is made possible free of charge (as always, donations will be welcomed) is owing to the dedication and generosity of many individuals, ranging from the hardworking competition committees to the judges, the generous donors of prizes and, of course, the performers. All are indispensable, all deserve recognition and gratitude. As space constraints make that impossible, what follows are close-ups of a few of the outstanding contributors to past competitions.

Among the many benefactors whose generosity helps to provide the monetary support without which the annual competitions would not be possible are the people behind last year's two grand prizes: the Grace Marion Galinas Clark Memorial Award and the Helena Foundation Grand Prize. The former, a \$2,500 award, is given by Grace Victoria Clark Waidner and William Ellery Clark to honor their mother.



Victoria Clark Waidner and William Ellery Clark, donors of the Vocal Competition's Grace Marian Galinas Clark Memorial Award, with prize winner Rolando Sanz.

Vicki Waidner, a former Annapolis Opera vice-president and Honorary Chair of this year's Vocal Competition, is an outstanding educator—under her leadership Mayo Elementary School achieved National Blue Ribbon status—and a devoted patron of numerous community cultural organizations, in addition to Annapolis Opera. In 2009 she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Anne Arundel County Arts Council, where she also served as a trustee. Her mother, in whose name the Vocal Competition Award is given, enjoyed a 40-year career as a ballet teacher and choreographer and founded both the Annapolis Civic Ballet Company and the Grace Clark School of the Dance.

Sylvia and Jim Earl's Helena Foundation's long-time support has allowed the Annapolis Opera to offer free public admission to the Vocal Competitions and last year also underwrote the Grand Prize Award—a trip to the Amalfi Coast Music Festival and Institute. The extent of the Earls' generosity to local cultural institutions received recent acknowledgement by their being honored by the Anne Arundel Arts Council with the 2009 Annie Award. Jim, a professor emeritus in the University of Maryland's Department of Astronomy, is also a painter and etcher whose work was recently exhibited at St. John's College, and Annapolis Opera board member Sylvia's watercolors are also well-known to Annapolitans. The Earls have announced that the Helena Foundation will continue its support by contributing \$9,000 to this year's Vocal Competition.



Sylvia and Jim Earl, donors of the Helena Foundation's Grand Prize, with winner Rolando Sanz.

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From the General Manager



A stage director friend of mine recently said, “If you can YouTube your way through the world, what haven’t you seen at this point? If media keeps you in the role of passive observer, what do you crave?” In our day and age of multimedia, there’s no fooling an audience anymore with routine theatrical tricks. I think my friend was saying what would feel new to an audience today is something immediate and human—a story told with clarity and sincerity. That’s what I think our audience will take away from *The Marriage of Figaro*.

At the heart of this complex masterpiece is a simple love story of one couple, mirrored by the rekindling romance of another couple. These characters are not some homogenous group of people, but a microcosm of society. The characters are all there for a reason and have a role in determining the

outcome of the story. For me, Act II is where Mozart shows us the greatest humanity, beginning with the Countess’ heart-wrenching “*Porgi amor*.” The Act ends with one of my most beloved pieces of music, the Act II Finale. This section of the opera requires no tricks, no flash or theatrical fireworks. Our artistic and stage directors, Ron Gretz and Braxton Peters, will undoubtedly poise our artists onstage to present the most human look at Figaro we’ve ever seen. *The Marriage of Figaro* remains to be as relevant today in the 21st century as it was upon its composition, 225 years ago.

While they may be gearing up for the wedding at Buckingham Palace, the real wedding of the year will be taking place right here in Annapolis and the public is invited! It’s a new year and 2011 is off to a great start.

Warmest regards,

Jennifer Fletcher
General Manager

Did You Know

Marriage of Figaro Production Cost Facts

1 orchestra member (ave.) = \$870.96

(*Marriage of Figaro* has 31 orchestra members)

\$11.29 of each ticket covers the cost of the sets and scenery.

(Based on a sold out run of 2 shows at 730 seats each performance)

1 performer (ave.) = \$961.67

(There are 50 performers in this production)

34,413 words (approx.) in Beaumarchais’ libretto

\$0.04 per word that you will hear sung

\$406.25 per day to cover rehearsal and performance space rental cost

(This production rehearses for 32 days)

\$133.69 = The cost per ticket for Annapolis Opera to produce *Figaro* (total production costs divided by seats sold for last year’s production of *Tosca*)

What this means for you:

- Whether you purchase a \$45, \$65, or \$85 ticket to *Figaro*, you’re getting a great deal!
- Annapolis Opera needs your support to continue to produce live, fully staged opera in Annapolis. Please consider making a tax-deductible gift to Annapolis Opera today.

Celebrate Opera! Fundraiser Raises \$10,000 and Recognizes Contributors

Annapolis Opera's September 23, 2010, fundraiser, *Celebrate Opera!*, at Wine Cellars of Annapolis at Clock Tower Place on Forest Drive in Annapolis was a rewarding experience for both the opera company and the approximately 100 contributors who attended. "A lovely evening of good wines, delicious food, and beautiful music in an interesting setting . . . a roaring success," said Nancie Kennedy, an Annapolis Opera Advisory Trustee. "Elegant . . . that's the word that comes to mind," Opera president Leah Solat added.

The event featured wine tasting with commentary by staff at Wine Cellars matched with fine cuisine from Tastings Gourmet Market, Praline Bakery, and My Butcher and More, all with shops at Clock Tower Place, and from Claire Owens Catering.

A highlight of the evening was a brief operatic performance by Jason Stearns, a baritone who sings principal roles at the Metropolitan Opera, and Colleen Daly, a soprano who is a favorite of Annapolis Opera audiences. The singers were accompanied by Annapolis Opera Artistic Director, Ronald Gretz.

Major sponsors for the event were What's Up Media—Magazines, Online, Video, Events; Whitmore Group; Wine Cellars of Annapolis; Hyatt & Weber, P.A.—Attorneys at Law; Watermark—Tours, Charters, Cruises; and Emerging Communications.

Wine Cellars also contributed fine wine and champagne for a raffle and silent auction and Clair Owens Catering contributed a catered dinner for 6 persons for the silent auction.

The honorary committee for the event included Ardeth Cade; Kathy Dahl; Pat Edwards; Anna Greenberg; Manelle Martino; Christopher B. Nelson; Lily Oppenshaw; George Shenk; and Veronica Tovey.



Watermark owner Debbie Gosselin with Annapolis Opera President Leah Solat

The generous business support for this event helped boost gross proceeds to almost \$17,000, with net proceeds at nearly \$10,000. Annapolis Opera deeply appreciates this local business support. Special thanks are due to Gladys Datch and Dori Ball, volunteer event organizers

This first major Annapolis Opera fundraiser in several years left long-time Annapolis Opera supporters and many new contributors clamoring for an encore!



(l to r) Dolly Loennig, Dori Ball, Bob Libson, Virginia Clagett, and Madeleine Hughes enjoy Celebrate Opera!



Season Closes With *Opera Amore* on May 21

None of the performing arts celebrates love more splendidly than grand opera. Annapolis Opera closes the 2010-11 season with a lush display of some of the most beloved romantic arias, duets, and ensembles with *Opera Amore* at St. John's College's Key Auditorium on Saturday, May 21, at 8 p.m.

Annapolis Opera's artistic director Ron Gretz has assembled an outstanding cast of singers for this concert, notably including Rolando Sanz, the tenor who won the hearts and all of the major prizes at last season's 22nd Annual Vocal Competition (see

comments from Sanz in this issue's article on this year's Vocal Competition).

Joining Sanz on stage will be Karin Paludan-Sorey, a soprano well known to Washington opera lovers, and tenor Sean



Arnold, a resident artist at the prestigious Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia.

Rounding out the concert cast is Chad Armstrong, a Dicapo Opera Resident Artist acclaimed for his "formidable baritone voice" and Corrine Winters, a fourth-year AVA resident artist who makes her Metropolitan Opera debut this year in *Das Rheingold* and *Rigoletto*.

Make plans now to celebrate spring and love with *Opera Amore* on May 21. Tickets are available now by calling 410-280-5640. For more information, call 410-267-8135 or go to www.AnnapolisOpera.org.



**“Mozart’s Marriage”
Continued from page 1**

Barber of Seville, is best known today from Rossini’s 1816 opera. By the time

Mozart turned his attention to Figaro’s world, however, *The Barber of Seville* had already been used in Giovanni Paisiello’s long-forgotten opera of 1782. Thus Mozart based his opera on Baumarchais’ second book of Figaro’s adventures (the third volume of which, *The Guilty Mother*, was not turned into an opera until Darius Milhaud did it in 1966!).

Mozart’s opera takes place in the castle of Count Almaviva on a single day—the day on which Figaro and Susanna are to wed. The opera’s Italian title, “*Le Nozze di Figaro, ossia la folle giornata*,” tells it all—“The Marriage of Figaro, or the Day of Madness.”

Wedding days are always hectic, but nothing compares to Mozart’s joyful romp through Almaviva’s castle on Figaro’s special day, with a heady dose of plotting, spying, mistaken identities, and lechery. Almaviva has fallen out of love with his once-adored countess Rosina, the count intends to deflower Figaro’s intended, Susanna, the countess has eyes for the page Cherubino, the scheming Dr. Bartolo wants to get even with Figaro for thwarting his earlier designs on Rosina. It goes on and on in a frenetic and hilarious showcase of Mozart’s comedic genius.

First performed in Vienna on May 1, 1786, Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* was an instant hit. The audience at the premiere demanded so many encores that the opera took nearly twice the scheduled running

time to complete. Demands for encores were even greater at the second performance, prompting Emperor Joseph to issue an edict banning encores at future performances. Despite the ban, audiences for more than two centuries have delighted in *Figaro’s* incomparable arias, duets, and ensembles, making it one of the most popular operas of all time.

Maestro Ron Gretz has assembled a sterling cast of outstanding young singers to delight Annapolis Opera audiences. Colleen Daly returns for her second visit of the season to sing the role of Countess Almaviva, with Jerett Gieseler, last season’s Baron Scarpia in our production of *Tosca*, as Count Almaviva. Ryan Kuster, who sang Angelotti in *Tosca*, appears as Figaro. Soprano Zulimar Lopez-Hernandez reprises the role of Susanna, which she most recently sang at last summer’s Glimmerglass Opera. Stephanos Tsirakoglou, a stunning bass-baritone who thrilled Annapolis Opera audiences at last season’s *Opera Lite* concert, will sing Dr. Bartolo. Mezzo Olivia Vote, a standout at last season’s *Gifts From Grand Opera*, will sing Cherubino. Joseph Houghton, who in the role of Beppe charmed audiences in our 2009 production of *Pagliacci*, will sing the roles of Basilio and Don Curzio. The cast also includes Andrew Adelsberger as Antonio and Madeleine Gray as Marcellina.

Sung in Italian with English supertitles, tickets priced from \$25 (student) to \$85 are available now for both the Friday night premiere and the Sunday matinee performances by calling 410-280-5640. For additional information, call 410-267-8135 or go to www.AnnapolisOpera.org.

Once in a Lifetime Opera Experience in Santa Fe

Annapolis Opera is organizing a tour to the Santa Fe Opera Festival, August 1 through 5. We’ll stay at the Inn and Spa at Loretto, Santa Fe’s leading luxury hotel in the historic center, and with our own tour host enjoy exclusive guided tours, backstage visits, lectures, and private museum visits. We’ll enjoy four-star cuisine enhanced by special guest artists who will join us for dinner.

The highlight of the week will be opera, with outstanding casts presenting Gounod’s *Faust*, Puccini’s *La Boheme*, Berg’s *Wozzeck*, and Menotti’s *The Last Savage*. You’ll also have the option to attend a fifth opera, Vivaldi’s *Griselda*. We’ll have first category seating for all operas. Cost for this upscale and personal opera experience of a lifetime is \$3,200 to \$3,700 per person double occupancy, depending on inclusions. Airfare is additional.

We’ll need a minimum of twelve Annapolis Opera patrons to sign up for this very special opera experience, so we need to know if you’re interested by Jan. 31. So talk it over today and let us know soon if you’ll join us on this extraordinary cultural trek next summer. Call 410-267-8135 for more information or to make reservations.

Zuckerman Seminar on *Figaro* at St. John’s

Opera buffs and novices alike will appreciate Annapolis Opera’s production of Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* even more if they take advantage of Elliot Zuckerman’s seminar devoted to the opera, which will be offered as part of the St. John’s College Continuing Education Program.

A noted musicologist, pianist, artist, and cultural commentator, Zuckerman will offer a seven-session seminar on *Marriage of Figaro* at St. John’s College on Wednesday

evenings, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., February 2 through March 16. Participants will study and discuss Mozart’s great comic masterpiece in six sessions leading up to Annapolis Opera’s presentation of the opera on March 11 and 13, with a final recap session held the week following the performance.

An authority on Wagner and Chopin, Zuckerman is well-known to Annapolis audiences as a lively and authoritative performer and commentator at St. John’s

College, where he has been a tutor since 1961. He has enthralled audiences with innumerable presentations at Caritas, Annapolis Symphony Symphonic Suppers, and other gatherings. He has also been a guest lecturer for the Metropolitan Opera Guild.

Tuition for Zuckerman’s seminar is \$210. To register or for additional information, contact Molly Burnett at 410-626-2881.

Thanks to our Major Donors!

Annapolis Opera welcomes and needs financial support at all levels, but major gifts are what enable us to produce the fully staged opera that is the highlight of each season. This year's production of *Figaro* would not be possible without the generous support of the following donors:

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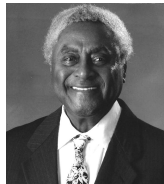
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“23rd Annual Vocal” Continued from page 1

Another long-time mainstay of the Vocal Competition is Dr. William B. Ray, who is a frequent opera adjudicator. Likewise a 2009 Annie recipient, Dr. Ray has performed as a concert and opera singer and television actor, in addition to serving as a Professor of Voice at Johns Hopkins University’s Peabody Conservatory and Head of the Voice Department at Howard University. Although Dr. Ray graduated from Ohio’s Oberlin Conservatory of Music, it was in Germany and Austria that his career as an opera singer took flight, resulting in a 25-year foreign tour. While living in Stuttgart, he founded the Black Theater Productions, one of the achievements for which he received the National Opera Association’s “Lift Every Voice” Legacy Award that honors contributions of African-Americans to opera.



Dr. Bill Ray

Eight performers wow at Annapolis Opera vocal competition. That was how the Baltimore Sun headlined its review of last year’s vocal competition. Enhancing the “WOW” factor, in a competition lauded for its diversity of voices, was Rolando Sanz’ standout performance, one that garnered him a sweep of prizes: Grand Prize, the Director/Conductor’s Award, the

Audience Choice Award, and the Helena Foundation Grand Prize Trip to the Amalfi Coast Music and Art Festival.

The Vocal Competitions are an essential part of one of the Annapolis Opera’s principal goals, that of assisting aspiring opera singers. In this endeavor the performers themselves are the stars, so we have asked last year’s winner Rolando Sanz to comment on his experience. Sanz had several earlier triumphs under his belt, including appearances with the Palm Beach and Baltimore Concert Operas, and won critical approval from the widely respected Opera News, which reported that he “unfurled a warm, strong, highly promising tenor” in his Carnegie Hall debut singing the role of Kostik in the world premiere of Prokofiev’s lost opera, *To the Distant Seas*. Shortly after his Annapolis triumph another honor fell to Sanz: a first place in the Maryland Opera Society’s Vocal Arts Competition held last June.

In answer to our query as to how he goes about preparing for a competition, Sanz pointed out that “it is quite different than preparing an opera role” in that “we are only able to provide a glimpse of the character in the short aria we present...there is no time to ease into a performance like in an opera...it has to peak instantly.” As to his decision on what to perform, he deems it a “tough call,” because “the arias need to accentuate your strengths but also be

part of the standard repertoire that will allow both the audience to enjoy the performance and for the judges to be able to evaluate your singing.”

“Competitions first and foremost are a great performance opportunity,” Sanz remarked, noting that he “learned a lot about controlling nerves and performing under pressure” in the various competitions he has sung in. And, he acknowledged, “it is always helpful to be able to win a little bit of money in order to subsidize what is a very expensive and time-consuming way to make a living.” Still, he exclaimed, “what better way to make a living than to make beautiful music every day!” Asked about the effect of last year’s Annapolis Opera competition, where he won the prize trip to Italy to participate in the Amalfi Coast Music Festival, he responded that “It was wonderful to be back in Italy and to drink in the culture, people and music to remind me why I do what I do.”

It is not only young singers who benefit from the Annapolis Opera Vocal Competition. Audiences too are rewarded by its finals program, which provides a rare opportunity to be part of a key phase in the development of this wonderful art form. So be sure to mark your calendar for the finals concert on April 10 and alert your friends and neighbors to what is sure to be an exhilarating experience.