

Mercyhurst University D'Angelo Department of Music
presents

WIT & WISDOM

OPERA TO BROADWAY:

BIZET & MENOTTI TO BERNSTEIN & SONDHEIM



Into the Woods



Trouble in Tahiti



Carmen

KATHERINE SOROKA, mezzo-soprano
ROBERT FRANKENBERRY, pianist & tenor

Wednesday, March 16 8 PM

Walker Recital Hall

WIT & WISDOM: From Opera to Broadway

Bizet & Menotti to Bernstein & Sondheim

Wit and Wisdom: The title and repertoire for this program were chosen in a more tranquil time - offering a lens on the world through the songs of these composers and librettists/lyricists to be uplifted and inspired - albeit from the distanced perspective of COVID isolation.

Delayed by masking mandates, this program is performed now as the world is witnessing the atrocities of the Ukraine invasion and the threat of nuclear war. What do these operatic and musical theatre works and their composers offer us now as we seek meaning through music and art? How can art make change without guns – and how can it open minds closed by cognitive dissonance?

Opera has always been political, since its beginnings in the 17th-century Italian courts. Political power struggles are as central to opera plots as are the many aspects of love with which they're intertwined. Composers and their librettists have always created operas about rulers and political movements - the good, bad, and the ugly - and the upheavals their reigns have manipulated.

Hierarchical society was a rich source of material. The plays of Beaumarchais enraged the monarchy, including Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* that glorified the wit of the lower classes at the expense of the aristocracy and challenged the status quo of the class system, advancing the cause of democracy leading up to the French Revolution. For the first time, ideas sprang up that the class system was neither a natural nor a moral form of government and that people of all races had basic rights and freedoms that should not be taken away by rulers or government.

Not only Rossini and Mozart in his *Marriage of Figaro* wrote music that was on the front lines moving Europe ahead politically, but a hundred years later Meyerbeer was writing about the abuses of the Grand Inquisition, the fanaticism of the Anabaptist rebellion and exploits of colonialism – and plots still were manipulated by the Medieval feudal right of Lords to have sexual relations with subordinate peasant women on their wedding nights or by decree for their pleasure.

The Italian *verismo* movement begun by the Sicilian author Giovanni Verga in the late-nineteenth century was revolutionary in its own way, as seen in the aria from Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*, with its dramatic realism depicting the passion of ordinary people in the harsh and violent rural life of Southern Italy. Aggrandizing a passionate gypsy woman - Carmen - whose freedom credo and passion would cost her her life in the eponymous opera, Bizet's work was rejected by the critics and Parisian public and deemed a creative and financial flop. He died shortly thereafter of depression and ill health, never to see its resounding international success and artistic canonization.

Menotti's opera *The Consul* communicates the most powerful message regarding the plight of those suppressed by a totalitarian regime, as Madga is denied a visa to flee her country – devastatingly relevant today as hundreds of thousands around the world are protesting the vaccine passport mandates restricting their freedoms and costing their jobs if they say “No - my body-my choice”.

In this program, both Wit and Wisdom are provided by Leonard Bernstein's music, about which, according to his daughter Jaime, “he felt if he could just write a good enough melody, he might be able to heal the world.” Bernstein would have been appalled at Putin's invasion of the Ukraine. One of his last concerts was in 1989, as the Berlin Wall was coming down. He led a powerful performance of Beethoven's Ninth in Berlin, which was broadcast all over the world in a kind of universal shout of joy that Soviet Communism was finished. As we are praying for the end of violence, we are comforted and inspired by the wisdom of Bernstein's words which accompanied the performance of Mahler's Second Symphony he conducted after the tragic assassination of John F. Kennedy: “But this sorrow and rage will not inflame us to seek retribution; rather they will inflame our art. Our music will never again be quite the same. This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.”

PROGRAM

Per Pietà (*Il Floridoro*) Alessandro Stradella (1643-1682)

Una voce poco fa (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

Voi lo sapete, o mamma (*Cavalleria rusticana*) Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)

Ah! mon fils (*Le Prophète*) Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864)

Pays merveilleux... O paradis (*L'Africaine*) Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864)

Robert Frankenberry, tenor

Seguidilla Scene (*Carmen*) Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

To This We've Come (*The Consul*) Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)

--- BRIEF INTERMISSION ---

Somewhere (*West Side Story*) Leonard Bernstein (1919-1990)

Easily Assimilated (*Candide*)

What a Movie (*Trouble in Tahiti*)

In Buddy's Eyes (*Company*) Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)

Could I Leave You (*Company*)

Children Will Listen (*Into the Woods*)

Sunday (*Sunday in the Park with George*)

Please silence all electronic devices. The use of recording devices is strictly prohibited.

Per Pietà**Alessandro Stradella (1643-1682)****O have Pity - *Floridoro* or *A Moor for Love***

Alessandro Stradella was one of the most original and inventive of the mid-Baroque composers in 17th century Italy. In addition to writing six Baroque operas, he composed 27 instrumental pieces, six oratorios and 70 cantatas on sacred subjects, which presages Handel's oratorios and from which Handel freely borrowed. His splendid gift of melodic writing is considered to nearly equal that of Scarlatti, who was influenced by Stradella in his early writing. His writing for the voice was both virtuosic and ethereal, a kind of verbal theatre which was rare in its time.

Stradella's life resembled a melodrama, and was the subject of several novels, a narrative written in Paris in 1715 and an opera by Flotow. Stradella was acclaimed for the beauty of his singing voice, which - with his taste for beautiful women - led to his demise. Purportedly, a Venetian nobleman engaged Stradella to give voice and harpsichord lessons to his mistress, Ortensia. Betraying his trust and falling in love with her himself, Stradella eloped with Ortensia to Rome, to which the outraged Venetian sent two assassins to put him to death. He fled again to Turin, then to Genoa, where at the age of 42 he was murdered with Ortensia by assassins hired by the betrayed Venetian.

For good reason, common themes in Stradella's vocal works were sufferings of forlorn lovers and betrayal. *Il Floridoro*, also known as *Il Moro per amore* (A Moor for love, or alternately, A fool for love) is no exception. Written on a libretto by Flavio Orsini, Duke of Bracchiano in 1681, a year before Stradella's murder in Genoa, the opera in three acts has the Shakespearean interplay of a wartime version of "Upstairs, Downstairs".

Floridoro, prince of Cyprus, disguises himself as a Moor, Feraspe, in order to woo Eurinda, the unmarried queen of Sicily, with whom his country is at war. He is brought to the court of Eurinda disguised as a slave in chains. While an ambassador from Naples is attempting to secure Eurinda's hand for the king of Naples, she falls in love with the disguised Feraspe/Floridoro. Unfortunately, so has her lady in waiting, Lucinda. When Lucinda overhears the two lovers declaring their love for each other, she orders Feraspe/Floridoro to deliver a letter to a remote part of the kingdom (where his life will be endangered by enemies from his native Cyprus engaged in war skirmishes).

In Act III, Eurinda sings her plaintive aria in distress having learned from Lucinda that her beloved Feraspe has been sent behind enemy lines and may never return.

O have pity, return now to me!
My beloved, where are you?
My eyes are sad,
They do not know how to live without you.

**Una voce poco fa - *Il barbiere de Seville*
A Voice Just Now - *The Barber of Seville*****Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)**

In the years leading up to the French Revolution, a trilogy of plays that challenged the status quo of the class system and enraged the monarchy was written by French

playwright Pierre-Augustin Beaumarchais (1732-1799). *The Marriage of Figaro* was among them, as was *The Barber of Seville*.

Gioachino Rossini's setting of *The Barber of Seville*, based on a libretto by Cesare Sterbini, was premiered in Rome in 1816. One of the most performed comic operas in the repertoire, it was written when he was only 24 years of age. Of note is that most of his three-dozen operas, six cantatas, three pieces of sacred music, numerous songs and duets, a song-cycle, and several instrumental works were written before he was 37 years old.

Rossini said, "Every kind of music is good, except the boring kind." Likened to the aural equivalent of champagne, Rossini's *Barber of Seville* is anything but that. It is joyous, madcap, musical mayhem—sparkling with energy and playful humor and glorifying the wit of the lower classes at the expense of the aristocracy.

In this prelude to *The Marriage of Figaro*, the young Count Almaviva falls in love with Rosina, the ward of a pompous, old guardian, Dr. Bartolo (who himself intends to marry her.) Because Almaviva wants Rosina to love him for himself and not his money, he pretends to be a penniless student, Lindoro. To free her from the entrapment of her greedy guardian, Lindoro enlists the help of the jack-of-all-trades barber, Figaro.

Una voce poco fa is from Act I, scene 2. Rosina is in her room thinking of the voice of the young man she has just heard singing to her from below her balcony - Lindoro (Almaviva in disguise). He has been serenading her and they have exchanged notes. The witty and clever heroine sings of her secret love for the mysterious stranger Lindoro and her determination to win his love. Because the possessive and tyrannical Dr. Bartolo has locked her in his house and plans to marry her himself, she swears that if Dr. Bartolo tries to interfere, she knows a hundred tricks to get her way. Lindoro will be hers!

A voice just now echoes here in my heart;
Already my heart has been pierced
And Lindoro inflicted the wound.
Yes, Lindoro shall be mine; I swear it. I will win.

My guardian will refuse me;
I shall sharpen all my wits. In the end he will be calmed
And I shall rest contented. Yes, Lindoro shall be mine;
I swear it. I will win.
Yes, Lindoro shall be mine; I swear it, yes.

I am docile, I'm respectful, I'm obedient, gentle, loving;
I let myself be ruled. I let myself be guided.
But... but if they touch me on my weak spot,
I'll be a viper and a hundred tricks I'll play before I yield.

Voi lo sapete, o mamm - *Cavalleria rusticana*
O Mother, You Know – *Rustic Chivalry*

Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945)

The world premiere of *Cavalleria rusticana* (**Rustic Chivalry**) by Pietro Mascagni in Rome in 1890 was one of the greatest triumphs in the history of opera. Mascagni had to appear sixty times for curtain calls – lasting nearly as long as the one-act opera itself.

Mascagni wrote it at the age of 27 as a competition entry to the libretto of Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci. It was judged the First Prize winner, and proved to be Mascagni's first and greatest success.

Cavalleria Rusticana is an adaptation of the short story and play by the Sicilian writer Giovanni Verga, the originator and most important writer of the *verismo*, late-19th century literary movement; *verismo* stories spotlighted common people and portrayed the dark, harsh and violent side of life in rural Sicily and Southern Italy.

At the heart of *verismo* is excess – an excess of passion and emotion leading to a brutal murder and/or suicide with climax following climax – all with dramatic realism while depicting everyday characters. While *verismo* was relatively short-lived, its style lasted into the twentieth century in Italian cinema and American operas by Samuel Barber, Carlisle Floyd and Gian Carlo Menotti – seen in the latter's aria “To This We've Come” from *The Consul*, which follows in this concert.

Cavalleria Rusticana was the first work of the *verismo* opera genre - seething with the passion, jealousy and heartbreak that can only result from a scandalous, small-town affair. It combined realistic theater with raw emotional music to express violent passions and intense feelings. Intricacies of song form and embellished vocal lines were abandoned in favor of dramatic vocal lines. Dramatic tension was achieved with increased volume, rising pitches and wide melodic leaps and utilizing the orchestra in the role of the “narrator”. Mascagni used over half a dozen leitmotifs as musical building blocks – such as in the “love” and “jealousy” leitmotifs in Santuzza's aria about betrayal and loss.

The plot is set in the confines of the strict Sicilian moral order with its importance of religion, ritual and a heightened sense of honor. The setting is Easter Sunday in a humble working-class community on a Roman Catholic feast day when a love triangle turns violent and deadly.

Returning from military service, Turiddu found that his fiancée Lola had married a prosperous wagon owner and driver while he was away. As revenge, Turiddu seduces Santuzza, a young woman in the village. Lola, in her jealousy, has taken up with Turiddu again in an adulterous affair.

Santuzza watches the fervent Easter Sunday procession emerging from the church that she cannot enter because everyone knows that she has sinned with Turiddu; she is shamed and considers herself excommunicated and damned. Turiddu's mother Mamma Lucia, who is not aware that he is having an affair with Lola, invites Santuzza into her house and asks what she knows of Turiddu's whereabouts. Santuzza tells her, with her heart breaking, that Turiddu is having an affair with Lola, who in jealousy stole him away from Santuzza.

O mother, you know
That before he went for a soldier
Turiddu had sworn eternal faith to Lola.
On his return, he found her married,
And sought with a new love

To quell the flame, which burned in his heart:
He loved me, I loved him.

But she, envious of my only delight and forgetful of her husband,
Burned with jealousy ...
She stole him from me ... And I am left disgraced;
Lola and Turiddu are lovers, and I am left to weep.

**Ah! mon fils (*Le Prophète*) Ah,
my son – The Prophet**

Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864)

Considered Meyerbeer's greatest opera, *The Prophet* had its world premiere in Paris on April 16, 1849. While it features the richest and most complex characters of all his operas, it is not for the faint of heart. With its religious fanaticism, intolerance and mob scenes - most relevant to modern audiences, Grand Opera doesn't get much darker; in the end, everyone commits suicide or gets blown to bits in an explosion that has been compared to the conclusion of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*.

Set in the midst of the historic Anabaptist rebellion of 1534, as related in Voltaire's history of medieval European wars, a tailor's apprentice Jean de Leyde declares himself divinely inspired and becomes King of Münster. Librettist Eugène Scribe takes this historical background and blends it with an invented personal story about Jean and his mother Fidès that is nuanced and full of unexpected turns. Jean is not a hero, but an anti-hero. His mother, Fides, is the main character and not his lover Berthe.

The opera opens as Jean's mother has accompanied her son's betrothed, Berthe, to get permission from the Count Oberthal for their wedding the next day. Admiring Bertha's beauty, Oberthal refuses to give permission for her to marry Jean and orders Berthe to be seized and brought to the castle for his own pleasure.

This *droit du seigneur* - the right in medieval Europe, allowing feudal lords to have sexual relations with subordinate women on their wedding nights - was not lost to audiences of his day. Voltaire condemned it in 1762 and it was pivotal to Beaumarchais in 1784 in *The Marriage of Figaro* - the sequel to *The Barber of Seville*. It also is the critical *mise en scène* for the entire plot of *Le Prophète*.

In Acts Two, Berthe has escaped from the Count's Castle and is being hidden by Jean in his Inn. When Count Oberthal arrives he threatens that if Jean doesn't hand over Berthe to him, his mother will die - whom the soldiers have captured on the way to him. As a soldier holds a battleax over his mother's head, Jean chooses his love for his mother - saving her life but letting go of the love of his life, Berthe, who leaves with Oberthal.

As a side note, Meyerbeer's *The Prophet* was the second opera and the only remaining in the repertoire to introduce the saxophone in his orchestration of the climactic suicide of Jean's lover - Berthe.

"Ah, my son" is sung by Fides in the second act after her son has spared her life instead of his lover Berthe, as she prays that he is protected and blessed by God.

Ah! my child! Ah! my child!
For your poor mother did you then smother
All your sweet dreams of Bertha's love?

Ah! my child! Ah! my child!
You have, alas! cast away, for thy mother, even more than life,
All the hopes that had warmed your young heart.
Ah! my child! Ah! my child!

May gracious heaven receive my prayer!
Angels attend thee, Spirit defend thee.
My child ever blessed - ever blessed be thou!
Ever blessed by God. My child! My child!
Heavenly benedictions rest on you, my child!

Pays merveilleux... O paradis

Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864)

Wondrous Country – O paradise *The African Woman*

Meyerbeer's five-act opera *L'Africaine* was the last of his works, one of his most mature and enormously successful in the 19th century with a sensational premiere attended by the Emperor Napoleon III and Empress in 1865. Although the opera was performed in London, Berlin, Brussels and New York in the first year after its premier, it fell into neglect in the 20th century except for rare revivals, including one by Plácido Domingo.

Depicting the fictional events of explorer Vasco da Gama's 1497-99 voyage to India, it mixes spectacular scenes including a ship caught in a storm with *bel canto* singing, glorious melodies, vivid characters, and a liberal humanism.

Meyerbeer intertwines an anti-colonization message of da Gama's explorations with the *Vecchia Africana* story about a Portuguese sailor who rescues a slave girl from an African market. While the first three acts are a realistic historical drama about Vasco, the last two acts return to the myth and something more intimate. In O Paradise, Vasco da Gama sings in rapture for the New World he has discovered – and claims it for himself.

Wondrous country, Lush garden, Radiant temple
I greet you!
Oh paradise rising out of the sea, the sky so blue, so clear,
My eyes are delighted! Oh, you belong to me!

Oh, new world which I shall offer - Offer to my country
For us, this bright-red Countryside!
For us, this Eden regained!

Oh delightful treasures! Oh wonders, I greet you!
New world, you belong to me!
You must be mine, Oh beautiful land!
You must be mine, be mine - For me, for me!

Seguidilla Scene *Carmen*

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

Born into a musical family, Georges Bizet is reputed to have learned to read and write music by age four. His prodigious gifts as pianist, sight-reader and composer brought him to the Paris Conservatoire before he was 10 years. Winning the covered Prix de Rome in 1857, he spent a fully subsidized year in Italy. Success for a French composer when he returned to Paris, however, meant writing opera for some of the best-equipped opera houses and theatres equipped for the extravaganzas of Meyerbeer and contemporaries.

Although Bizet desperately wanted to write successful operas, after he received acclaim for his early operettas and light opera, his career met with little success. It is said that his compositions were largely ignored because the main opera houses preferred the Grand Opera classical repertoire to works of the romantic era.

He had put all his hopes into *Carmen*, on a libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy based on the novella of the same name by Prosper Mérimée. The opera premiered in 1875, and, tragically, was a flop with savagely negative reviews. This was heart breaking to Bizet who died three months later from a combination of ill health and depression.

If only he could have lived another year! *Carmen*'s ascent to world-wide fame began within months. Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky – even Wagner begrudgingly praised it and Brahms attended over twenty performances, considering it the greatest European opera since the Franco-Prussian war. The Opéra-Comique has performed it 2,500 times.

In the First Act, *Carmen*, a Gypsy employed at ^[1] a cigarette factory in Seville, sings a song about the unpredictability of love as she flirts with Don José and throws him a flower. Don José, outraged at *Carmen*'s behavior, keeps the flower nonetheless. When a fight erupts inside the factory, the lieutenant Zuniga sends José to retrieve those responsible, and when the corporal returns with *Carmen*, the Gypsy refuses to answer Zuniga's questions. Zuniga orders José to take her to prison.

Left alone with him, *Carmen* entices José in an exquisitely seductive song, *Près des rampart de Séville*, with a rendezvous at Lillas Pastia's tavern where they will dance and drink Manzanilla wine. Mesmerized, he agrees to let her escape. As they leave for prison, *Carmen* pushes him away and runs to her freedom.

CARMEN

Tralalalala, I'm keeping my secret, and keeping it well!
Tralalalala, I love another, and will die saying I love him. Tralalalala..
Where are you taking me?

JOSÉ

To prison, and there's nothing I can do.

CARMEN

Really, you can't do anything?

JOSE

No, nothing! I obey my superiors.

CARMEN

Very well, but I know that in spite of your superiors
you'll do everything I want, and that because you love me!

JOSE

I, love you?

CARMEN

Yes, José!

The flower I made you a present of,
you know, the witch's flower -
you can throw it away now. The spell is working!

JOSE

Don't talk to me any more! You hear me?
Say no more. I forbid it!

CARMEN

By the ramparts of Seville, at my friend Lillas Pastia's place,
I'm going to dance the seguidilla and drink manzanilla.
I'm going to my friend Lillas Pastia's!

Yes, but all alone one gets bored,
And real pleasures are for two.
So, to keep me company, I shall take my lover!

My lover... he's gone to the devil:
I showed him the door yesterday.
My poor heart, so consolable -
My heart is as free as air.

I have suitors by the dozen, but they are not to my liking.
Here we are at the weekend;
Who wants to love me? I'll love him.
Who wants my heart? It's for the taking!
You've come at the right moment!
I have hardly time to wait, for with my new lover...

By the ramparts of Seville at my friend Lillas Pastia's place,
I'm going to dance the seguidilla and drink manzanilla.
I'm going to my friend Lillas Pastia's!

JOSE

Stop! I told you not to talk to me!

CARMEN

I'm not talking to you, I'm singing to myself;
And I'm thinking... It's not forbidden to think!
I'm thinking about a certain officer who loves me,
And whom in my turn I might really love!

JOSÉ

Carmen!

CARMEN

My officer's not a captain,
not even a lieutenant, he's only a corporal;
but that's enough for a gypsy girl
and I'll deign to content myself with him!

JOSÉ

Carmen, I'm like a drunken man,
If I yield, if I give in, you'll keep your promise?
Ah! If I love you. Carmen, you'll love me?

CARMEN

Yes... We'll dance the seguidilla while we drink manzanilla.

JOSÉ

At Lillas Pastia's... You promise!
Carmen... You promise!

CARMEN

Ah! By the ramparts of Seville, at my friend Lillas Pastia's place,
I'm going to dance the seguidilla and drink manzanilla.
Tra la la la la la la

To This We've Come

The Consul

Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)

Composer Gian Carlo Menotti came to the United States from Italy in his teens to study at the Curtis Institute of Music. His talent was recognized immediately, and within a decade, six of his operas had been produced. The success of *The Medium* on Broadway in 1947 inspired Menotti to create another opera specifically for a Broadway audience.

His first full-length opera, *The Consul*, which was premiered triumphantly on Broadway at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, earned Menotti the Pulitzer Prize and New York Drama Critic's Circle Award. By the time it reached the New York City opera in 1960 it was considered one of the most important American operas of the postwar period, as it remains today.

Menotti was inspired to write the work after reading a New York Times article dated 12 February 1947 regarding the tragic fate of a real-life Magda Sorel, a Polish woman who was refused admission to the United States. It struck a deep personal chord with Menotti, and that emotional connection speaks through his music to his audiences. The opera, which ends tragically, communicates a powerful message regarding the plight of those suppressed by a totalitarian regime – devastatingly relevant today as hundreds of thousands around the world are protesting the vaccine passport mandates restricting their freedoms and costing them jobs if they say, “No - my body-my choice”.

In an unnamed European city, John Sorel, a freedom fighter, is being pursued by the Secret Police. After being shot in the street, he has gone into hiding and his wife, Magda, is terrified that her fugitive husband is in danger. The Police Agent, a cruel and menacing officer of the state, is constantly hounding Magda to tell him where John or any of John’s friends are. Desperate for her family to be reunited and safe, Magda Sorel goes daily to the Consulate to secure the papers required for herself, her mother-in-law, and her baby in order to get a visa to leave the country and be reunited with John. Every day, she repeatedly encounters overwhelming and meaningless red tape and callous insensitivity.

In the climax of the opera's second act, Magda, who is emotionally overwrought and desperate to see the consul, one more time is handed yet another set of papers to fill out. She explodes in her emotionally powerful aria, "To this we've come" denouncing the consulate's inhumanity. In the aria she reveals that her child is dead, that John's mother is dying, and that she now believes her life is in danger. At its conclusion, she speaks for all those oppressed, ordering the secretary to warn the consul that one day "our hearts of flame will burn your paper chains."

LEONARD BERNSTEIN

It has been said that Charles Ives and Aaron Copland were great composers, but Leonard Bernstein was by far the greatest American musician. One of the most talented composers and conductors of his generation, Bernstein was also a pianist, lecturer, television personality and author - both an intellectual ‘Adonis’ and great humanitarian. ‘Lenny’s’ humor, wit and intellect delighted - and his generosity of spirit flowed endlessly and without reserve.

“His life, itself, was his composition”, wrote his protégé Michael Tilson Thomas in the New York Times in 2009 before the citywide Bernstein festival. “He stood at the center of a cultural empire with everyone looking to him as the arbiter of taste and acceptance.” Both Thomas and Lenny’s daughter Jamie Bernstein describe the after-concert party entourage gatherings at which he ‘held court’ - which I experienced myself in the years that I had the great pleasure of working closely with Leonard Bernstein at the New York Philharmonic as a senior executive managing concerts and serving as artist liaison.

I would escort Lenny backstage and watch as he would have one last sip of scotch from his silver cup and kiss each of his Koussevitsky cuff links before going on stage. Always smoking, one night, he forgot he still had his ubiquitous cigarette in his hand as he began to walk onto the stage. I lurched toward him and whispered, “Lenny - your cigarette.” He threw it to the floor, stamping it out, came to me and kissed me on either cheek, and then

again kissed each of his Koussevitsky cufflinks before walking on stage. In thanks, Lenny created for me a signed musical thank you anagram, which is a treasure.

The Green room after concerts was filled not only his entourage but also several dozen people waiting patiently in line to greet him - including on Saturday nights two nuns well known to Lenny. He spoke to each person as if they were the only person in the world, hugging and kissing them. It would go late into the night as he drank Scotch and smoked cigarettes and played the piano and sang... As Thomas described in his Times article, "Some of his greatest performances were given at post-concert parties for audiences of a few dozen. He would settle himself at the piano and begin a sequence of killer numbers."

After being up late Saturday nights with Lenny in the Green Room, Sunday matinees were memorable. To accommodate his always-late-arrival, I would "hold" the start of the concert, calling from the elevator phone to Charlie who was with him in the limo to see where they were, coming down Broadway from The Dakota. Lenny would swirl into the elevator in his red satin lined cape a little worse from the wear, but ready to go into the arena again. On one of the "day-after-the-night-before" matinees, I teased him, "Lenny, you missed your calling - you should have been a rock musician" - to which with great gusto he agreed and began dancing in the elevator, chanting, "Lenny the Nasty... No, Lenny, the Pernicious".

His joy of the ridiculous and outrageous in the elevator and in the post-concert Green Room in the midst of his own physical challenges in the eighties can be seen in both the Old Lady's joyous assimilation in the midst of *Candide's* seemingly endless tragedies and in Dinah's colorful reliving of a movie's love fantasy in *Trouble in Tahiti* in the midst of her marital despair. Lenny certainly understood Chaplin's quote "...it is paradoxical that tragedy stimulates the spirit of ridicule... we must laugh in the face of our helplessness against the forces of nature - or go insane."

Somewhere
West Side Story

Leonard Bernstein (1919-1990)

The acclaimed musical *West Side Story* opened on Broadway in 1957 with music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim; the movie version was released in 1961 and won the Academy Award for best picture. Inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, it originally was to be about the clash between Catholics and Roman Catholics on the east side of Manhattan. Responding to gang violence in Los Angeles while visiting there, Bernstein changed it to the clash of two rival gangs - Puerto Rican and Polish - battling for control of the streets in upper West Side New York City in the 1950s... the story of love forbidden by bigotry and social conditions.

Originally sung off stage in the Broadway production, in the 1961 movie version, *Somewhere* occurs after the rumble in which Tony has stabbed to death Maria's brother. Tony comes into her room through the balcony and Maria pounds against his chest but confesses that she still loves him. Tony promises to take her away from everything - so their love will survive "somehow, someday, somewhere."

I am Easily Assimilated **Leonard Bernstein (1919-1990)**

Candide

Candide is Bernstein at his outrageous, satirical best - questioning authority in its wildest revelation. Based on Voltaire's 1759 novel of the same name, which was banned in Switzerland and burned publicly, it is the tale of a young man grappling with the existence of evil. Denouncing the ironies and paradoxes of the 18th century philosophy of optimism, it reveals a world of wild contrasts and conquests, juxtapositioning the supposed virtues of the Inquisition with the cruelty inflicted on its victims. The Broadway musical translates this into an outrageous, fast-paced carnival.

In 1953, Lillian Hellman initially urged Bernstein to adapt Voltaire's novel to demonstrate the sinister parallels between the Inquisition and the anti-Communist "Washington Witch Trials". Her contributions, however, were removed while the show was still out of town in concern for political repercussions. Bernstein was writing *Candide* simultaneously with *West Side Story*. It opened on December 1, 1956 to mixed reviews and closed on February 2, 1957. Nonetheless, the original cast album was a hit and the score gained cult status.

In the second act of this most convoluted plot, the Old Lady - who has accompanied Cunegonde to a trial by the Grand Inquisitor of none other than her childhood sweetheart, Candide - reunites them only to have Candide kill the two men accompanying her. The Old Lady insists they must flee and steals a box of jewels as they escape. When the jewels are stolen, the Old Lady - no spring chicken herself who has "seen the world" - realizes she must raise funds by seducing three old men in *I am Easily Assimilated*.

To Bernstein, this song also would have been a play on the association of being assimilated with the Jews coming to America, which he knew so well. According to Kirsten Fermaglich in her paper 'Too Long, Too Foreign... Too Jewish', name changing emerged "as a significant Jewish strategy for upward mobility in New York City during the years between World War I and World War II."

What a Movie *Trouble in Tahiti*

Leonard Bernstein (1919-1990)

Premiered in 1952 in summer performances in Massachusetts including Tanglewood and on NBC television in the fall, in *Trouble in Tahiti* Bernstein returned opera to its roots in popular culture. It was one of the first new operas to be televised, just after Menotti had premiered his *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

Bernstein sought to write an opera in an American vernacular style in both music and language - with its roots in the musical theatre: "Under no circumstances should this ever sound or look like an opera in the conventional sense of the prima donna in distress or the tenor in a heroic moment." He dedicated the work to his close friend, composer Marc Blitzstein, who had urged him towards musical theatre.

Begun while Bernstein was on his honeymoon in 1951, it presents a candid portrait of a young couple's troubled marriage as a critique of post-war America materialism. Beneath Sam and Dinah's marital discord is their profound longing for love and intimacy in a

post-Freudian world... worthy of many comparisons to the compromised marriage of Leonard and his Costa-Rican born wife, actress Felicia Montealegre Bernstein.

Set as a day-in-the-life, after a squabble over breakfast, Dinah visits her psychiatrist where she reveals a dream she has had about a garden. Following her analyst appointment, she spends the afternoon in the movie theatre watching an escapist film called "Trouble in Tahiti". Loosened up from having one too many drinks while preparing her husband's supper, as if an extension of her analyst appointment, Dinah indulges in a day-dream. While first dismissing the movie as sentimental drivel, she recounts the story, becoming each of the characters. She remembers its theme song, "Island Magic" and lives in vivid color this escapist fantasy of love. Suddenly, when she becomes self-conscious, she stops herself and continues to prepare Sam's dinner.

STEPHEN SONDHEIM

While Bernstein challenged the definition of opera, moving it toward musical theatre, Sondheim innovated, challenged and stretched the boundaries of the American musical theatre – exploring issues of contemporary life with brilliant wordplay while exploring the human condition in significant ways.

Sondheim and Bernstein worked together on both *Candide* and *West Side Story*, complementing each other despite being almost exact opposite personalities. Sondheim was introverted and reserved and Bernstein was extroverted and outgoing. Sondheim's musical experience added to Bernstein's comfort in working with him. Sondheim's "less is more" approach countered Bernstein's "more is better". They became true friends.

On the night of the Broadway premier, Sondheim wrote to Lenny, that "means much more to me than a first show, more even than the privilege of collaborating with you and Arthur [Laurents] and Jerry [Robbins]. It marks the beginning of what I hope will be a long and enduring friendship. Friendship is a thing I give or receive rarely, but for what it's worth, I want you to know you have it from me always."

In Buddy's Eyes (*Company*)

Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)

"All things beautiful must die," we are told in an especially poignant lyric from *Follies* - about not just dreams deferred but dreams permanently dashed. In the 70's, Sondheim wasn't interested in glorifying the American dream. If anything he was shattering it, defying what musicals had done and no longer affirming positive values where virtue wins over evil and loving wins out over all.

With music and lyrics by Sondheim and a book by James Goldman, *Follies* is the story of a reunion of past performers of the "Weismann's Follies" (based on the Ziegfeld Follies) a musical revue in a crumbling Broadway theater which is scheduled for demolition. While another composer might have looked for the sentimental moments, Sondheim forces his two older couples to look back on their lives, to see the mistakes and to feel their pain. The story focuses on two showgirls, former roommates, and their husbands -

Buddy and Sally Durant Plummer and Benjamin and Phyllis Rogers Stone who are deeply unhappy with their marriages.

In Buddy's Eyes, Sally Plummer is still as much in love with Ben Durant as she was years ago during the Follies, when he was playing around with her, but gave a ring to the sophisticated Phyllis. Sally tells Ben how her days have been spent with Buddy, trying to convince him (and herself) that Buddy loves her (despite the fact that he has been having an affair with a girl on the road.)

Could I Leave You
Company

Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)

In his high-power career, Ben Durant has been completely self-absorbed and his wife Phyllis feels abandoned. Midway through the reunion, Phyllis confronts her husband telling him that their marriage cannot continue as it has been - to which Ben responds by asking her for a divorce. Phyllis insists this is because of his love for Sally, which Ben denies. But he still wants her gone. The quote 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned' finds new meaning in *Could I Leave You*, as Phyllis considers whether she should grant him his request.

Children Will Listen
Into the Woods

Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)

In the fairy-tale musical written by the award-winning team of James Lapine and Stephen Sondheim, Cinderella and her company of fairy tale friends travel into the dark, enchanted, but terrifying woods where they discover who they are and how they might grow up and overcome the aching fear of being alone. While topically difficult, with an ensemble cast with rewarding roles, beautiful music, a compelling and engaging story and feel-good ending, it is one of Sondheim's most frequently performed works. I was grateful to perform the Witch in the Barrow Civic Theatre's 2016 production.

In Frank Rich's anything but rave review, he perfectly describes the second act plot that precedes "Children Will Listen": "Everyone is jolted into the woods again - this time not to cope with the pubescent traumas symbolized by beanstalks and carnivorous wolves but with such adult catastrophes as unrequited passion, moral cowardice, smashed marriages and the deaths of loved ones."

This simply beautiful song, Children Will Listen, was written originally for another character in the First Act as an add-on to one the "Midnights". When it was cut, Children Will Listen was interpolated into the finale and sung by the Witch, providing the moral to the show and something rare in Sondheim - a message to those who hear to be better parents and better people.

Sunday
Sunday in the Park with George

Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)

The winner of the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for drama, *Sunday in the Park with George* is perhaps Sondheim's most acclaimed score. Based on the story of the artist Georges Seurat, Sondheim credits the *avant-garde* composer Milton Babbitt with whom he

studied for his “architectonic” methodology in combining a first act about the people in Seurat’s painting of *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of Grande Jatte* with a second act about his great-grandson (also named George), a cynical and conflicted contemporary artist creating redundant light installations. Seurat’s pointillism and mixing pure colors that only the eye could put together inspired Sondheim’s choice and combination of keys in the score as a way to evoke emotion in the listener.

Sunday in the Park looks inside the process of making art with a significant peek inside the mind of someone who is wrestling with their own genius. The show moves from 19th century France to 1980’s Chicago, exploring the reasoning behind an artist’s single-minded fixation with his creation. George’s role, as an observer, lets everyone else see the world differently and “move on” through empowerment.

At the conclusion of the play’s First Act, as the actors walk through the shadows, toward trees, “forever”, it is clear this will not be just another afternoon. The same three chords that opened the song finally move from dissonance to one glorious, final harmonious chord. After Sondheim’s untimely passing in November, 2021, just days before the premier of his movie version of *West Side Story*, a group of Broadway actors gathered in Times Square on a Sunday afternoon to perform “Sunday”, commemorating that Stephen Sondheim’s music and creations will live forever in us.

Of this work, Sondheim wrote, "Once during the writing of each show, I cry at a notion, a word, a chord, a melodic idea, an accompaniment figure... In this show, it was the word ‘forever’ in ‘Sunday.’ I was suddenly moved by the contemplation of what these people would have thought if they’d know they were being immortalized, and in a major way, in a great painting. I still cry when I think about it..."

BIOGRAPHIES

Hailed for her “masterful” and “heartfelt vocalism”, **mezzo-soprano Katherine “Kathy” Soroka** is known for connecting with audiences as a singer-actress. An accomplished pianist and seasoned actress and comedian, she creates characters and song interpretations that are brimming with life, pathos and humor. Her world premiere performance of David Stock’s *Songs of Solomon* with the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble was acclaimed for “finding both lush lines and dramatic intensity... commanding the stage”. (*TribLive*)

A winner of the Pittsburgh Concert Society Auditions, Katherine has performed for the Frick Museum in Pittsburgh “*Music for Exhibitions* concert” with Chatham Baroque in conjunction with “*From Michelangelo to Annibale Carracci, A Century of Italian Drawings From the Prado*” and performed recitals in numerous New York City venues, at Allegheny College with pianist Alec Chien, with pianist Nathan Carterette in Pittsburgh and at Mercyhurst and for the Allegheny RiverStone Center for the Arts.

A proponent of singing living composer’s works, Katherine performed Betty Oliviero’s *Juego de Siempre* in New York City with Joel Sachs and the internationally acclaimed new music ensemble, Continuum and has sung world premieres of David Stock’s *Rumi Sings of Love* at Duquesne University and Judith Shatin’s *Grave Music* at Aspen Music Festival as well as works by Chinery Ung and Noah Zahler, among others. She recently performed David Stock’s *Three Yiddish Songs* with a quartet of Pittsburgh Symphony members in the *If Music Be The Food* concert series.

Performances with orchestra include Samuel Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the Knoxville Symphony Orchestra; Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*; Bernstein's *Jeremiah Symphony* and David Stock's *Three Yiddish Songs* with the Edgewood Symphony; and Copland's *Old American Songs* with the Pittsburgh Civic Orchestra. She has narrated educational Tiny Tots and Schoolltime concerts with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

Recent operatic roles included Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera* and Klytaemnestra in *Elektra* with Chatham Concert Opera – appearing in both with tenor Robert Frankenberry; Dinah in *Trouble in Tahiti* with Aria412; and Baba in *The Medium* at Mercyhurst University. Early operatic roles in NYC were Dido in *Dido and Aeneas* at Columbia University, Romeo in *I Capuleti et i Montecchi*, for the Opera Ensemble and Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* for the Brooklyn Opera Company, before assuming a senior executive position at the New York Philharmonic, and leaving behind operatic performing to continue singing recitals and contemporary music in New York City.

Musical theatre roles include Jenny in *Company* at the Pittsburgh Playhouse, the Witch in *Into the Woods* with the Barrow Civic Theatre, and Vera in *Pal Joey* at the Colonial Theatre. In NYC, she's appeared in daytime soap operas, film and national TV commercials and performed cabaret shows at Panache and Don't Tell Mama and the McKeesport Symphony. And with Aria412 in Pittsburgh performing musical theatre, jazz favorites and comedic songs.

Her first career was "backstage" managing concerts and directing programs in some of the country's major arts organizations: In the senior management of the New York Philharmonic; as Executive Director of the Grand Teton Music Festival in Jackson Hole, WY; and on the faculty and administration of Manhattan School of Music developing the nationally-acclaimed Orchestral Performance Masters Degree Program and founding the innovative MUSIC IN ACTION: An Educational and Community ArtReach Program.

A magna cum laude graduate of Barnard College, Columbia University, Katherine studied voice in New York City with private teachers including Jennie Tourel, Olga Ryss, Doris Jung, Elaine Bonazzi, Ed Dixon, Dr. Michael Warren and Louisa Jonason; as well as at Aspen Music Festival, AIMS in Graz, Austria and with the North Carolina School of the Arts touring Italy. Acting study in NYC included work at the HB Studio, Actor's Institute and with renowned Actors Studio member Marilyn Fried, also coaching with Broadway actor and film choreographer/producer John DeLuca with whom she both appeared in *Pal Joey* in regional summer stock and was directed in *Company*.

Currently Katherine is a voice instructor and vocal accompanist on the faculty of Mercyhurst University. She also maintains a private voice studio in Pittsburgh and Foxburg and teaches cyber lessons to students across the country. Married to former Pittsburgh Symphony Principal Percussionist John Soroka, Katherine is a Board member of Allegheny RiverStone Center for the Arts in Foxburg, PA where they now reside with their Hungarian Vizsla, Plato.

Robert Frankenberry enjoys a multi-faceted relationship with music as a singer, pianist, conductor, orchestrator, director, and even occasionally as a composer.

Growing up in a musical household, his father was an evangelical minister who played the piano and organ by ear, and his mother was a singer, trumpet player, and choir director. Robert taught himself the fundamentals of piano and began accompanying hymns during Sunday night church services before beginning formal piano studies at the age of 12; he soon was playing choir rehearsals, accompanying singers and performing in the finals of the MN State

Fair talent contest Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C Sharp minor. When his family moved to North East, PA, he began studying with pianist Sam Rotman, who also served as the head of the Mercyhurst D'Angelo School of Music. In high school, equipped with a bassoon and a fingering chart, Robert traveled to Mercyhurst twice a week to play in the wind ensemble directed by Bob Dolwick. It was only natural for Robert to pursue undergraduate studies at Mercyhurst University, where he studied piano, accompanied singers, played the bassoon, took his first voice lessons and coached his first operas in Italian—*Così fan tutte*, *L'elisir d'amore*, and *Suor Angelica*; he also served as assistant conductor to Maestro Walter Hendl, starting off a lifetime of opera conducting.

On stage, Robert has performed a wide range of roles including Mozart (*Amadeus*), John Adams (*1776*), Bacchus (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), the title roles in *Don Carlo*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Faust*, and *Willy Wonka*, and Orson Welles in Daron Hagen's international award-winning film-opera *Orson Rehearsed*. At the piano, he regularly performs works by living composers with such groups as Pittsburgh's IonSound and AnimeBOP: New York City's The Phoenix Players and PRISM Players; and multi-city entelechron and Chrysalis Duo.

He has served on the coaching/accompanying staff at Seton Hill, Duquesne, Carnegie Mellon, and Point Park; the voice faculty at Mercyhurst (where he also acted as bassoon instructor and directed the orchestra) and Point Park; and the Theatre Arts faculty at the University of Pittsburgh, where he provided vocal direction for Pitt Stages' productions of *Nine*, *Peter & The Starcatcher*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; musical direction for *Hair* and *Little Shop of Horrors*; and direction for *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and *Parade*.

From 2018 to 2020, Robert served as visiting Music Director for the University of North Texas opera program, during which time he conducted productions of *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Don Giovanni*, *Regina*, *Gianni Schicchi*, and *Le Testament de la Tante Caroline*. He also developed the script and created musical arrangements for *If I Loved You*, the first ever officially sanctioned original dramatic revue using songs of Rogers and Hammerstein.

Robert was significantly involved with Pittsburgh Festival Opera from 2000 - 2021 in various capacities, including Artistic Administrator, Music Director, and Director of the Hans and Leslie Fleischner Young Artist Program, involved in the creative development, orchestration, and musical direction of: *The Tales of Hoffmann – Retold*; *Carmen* (black box adaptation with his own folk band orchestration); *Orpheus & Eurydice* (both Gluck and Gordon); *Shining Brow* (Fallingwater version); reduced orchestration for *Die Schweigsame Frau*; *Night Caps* (also contributing as a composer); *Night Caps International*; Roger Zahab's *Happy Hour*; Gilda Lyons' *A New Kind of Fallout*; Dwayne Fulton's *A Gathering of Sons*; the world-premiere live-performance adaptations of *Mr. Rogers' Operas*; *OWOW (Opera Without Walls)*; a film adaptation of Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon* (including full programming of his own orchestration); and a complete on-location film of Mark Adamo's *Lysistrata*.

Other recent projects include the role of Verdi in the remote project *Verdi by Vegetables* for Resonance Works | Pittsburgh; an 18 player orchestration of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* for Carnegie Mellon Opera; streaming performance for Music on the Edge of David Del Tredici's *MONSTERS, Part II: Scylla and Charybdis* for narrating pianist; and premieres of works by Aaron Wyanski and David Mahler with violinist Roger Zahab.

This Spring, he will sing the role of Cory in Daron Hagen's filmopera *9/10*, and in July the role of Thaddeus von Brakel in the premiere of Julia Werntz's *The Strange Child* with Kamratōn and Quince Ensemble. He can be heard singing and playing on the Naxos, Albany, New World Records, Roven Records, New Dynamic Records, and Innova labels, as well as various streaming platforms. Robert is currently serving as Interim Concert and Communications Coordinator for the Department of Music at the University of Pittsburgh.

D'ANGELO DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC
Upcoming Events - Spring 2022

All events and ticket prices listed on: www.mercyhurst.edu/music

D'ANGELO OPERA THEATRE

Dido and Aeneas by Henry Purcell

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center

Thursday, March 24, 2022 - 8 pm

Sunday, March 27, 2022 - 2 pm

ROCHE GUEST ARTIST SERIES

Maksim Shtrykov, clarinet, and Misuzu Tanaka, piano

Wednesday, April 11, 2022

8:00pm[†]_{SEP} Walker Recital Hall

FACULTY RECITAL SERIES

Presque Isle Saxophone Quartet

Friday, April 20, 2022

8:00 pm[†]_{SEP} Walker Recital Hall

JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Saturday, April 23, 2022

7:00 pm Taylor Little Theatre

CONCERT CHOIR

Friday, April 29, 2022

7:00 pm Walker Recital Hall

COMPOSERS' CONCERT

Sunday, May 1, 2022

2:00 pm Walker Recital Hall

SMALL ENSEMBLES CONCERT

Wednesday, May 4, 2022

7:00 pm Walker Recital Hall

WIND ENSEMBLE

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center

Saturday, May 7, 2022 - 7:00 pm[†]_{SEP}

MERCYHURST CIVIC ORCHESTRA

Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center

Sunday, May 8, 2022 - 4:30 pm[†]_{SEP}