Department of Music  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
UNLV Opera Theatre  
College of Fine Arts

presents

A Salute to American Opera  
Luana DeVol, director  
Chérié Roe, piano

PROGRAM

George Gershwin  
(1898 – 1937)

Douglas Moore  
(1893 – 1969)

Carlisle Floyd  
(b.1926)

Jack Beeson  
(1921 – 2010)

Aaron Copland  
(1900 – 1990)

INTERMISSION

Gian Carlo Menotti  
(1911 – 2007)

John Corigliano  
(b. 1938)

Mark Adamo  
(b.1968)

Thomas Pasatieri  
(b.1945)

Leonard Bernstein  
(1918 – 1990)

Porgy and Bess  
Song Selections

Ballad of Baby Doe  
Act I, Scene 2

Susannah  
Act II, Scene 3

Of Mice and Men  
Act II, Trio  
“You fellas buyin’ a farm?”

Lizzie Borden  
Act I, Scene 2

The Tender Land  
Scene from Act 2,  
“Try makin’ peace”

The Old Maid and the Thief  
Scenes XI and XII

The Ghosts of Versailles  
Act I, Scene 3  
“Come now my darling”

Little Women  
Act II, Scene 3  
“She’s asked for you”

The Seagull  
Act I  
“Alas, the stage”

Candide  
Finale  
“Make our Garden Grow”
PROGRAM NOTES

Porgy and Bess (1935)
Libretto by DuBose Hayward and Ira Gershwin
Claudia Cleo Lopez Porgy Genesis L. Brown
Jake Brian Myer Bess Amanda Mura
Sarena Martha Banko Sportin' Life Ira Gershwin

DuBose Hayward's novel, Porgy, deals with African American life in the early 1920s on Rainbow Row, a street in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1926, composer George Gershwin read Porgy, and several years later he collaborated with Hayward and Gershwin's brother, Ira, to create what he called an "American folk opera." Porgy and Bess has its first performance in New York in the fall of 1935. The opera opens on "Catfish Row." Clara sings a ballad to her baby, "Summertime." Jake, Clara's husband, sings his own version of a ballad, "A Woman is a Sometime Thing." An argument ensues during a crap game, and Robbins is killed by a bully named Crown, who flees the scene. Serena assures her husband singing "Baby Man's Gone Now." Porgy gives Bess, Crown's woman, shelter. In a scene from Act II, Sportin' Life is on the street selling drugs, and offers to take Bess to New York with him. Porgy drives him off and begins the duet, "Bess, You is my Woman Now." In Act III, Crown makes back to Catfish Row to claim Bess. In a fight, Porgy kills Crown. Detectives arrive but the neighbors' refuse to incriminate Porgy. Someone must identify the body, and Porgy is taken to the police station. Sportin' Life takes the opportunity to tell Bess that Porgy will be gone a long time and convinces her to leave with him, "There's a boat dat's leavin' soon for New York." Porgy returns from the police station to find Bess gone. He calls for his goat cart, and leaves New York for his old friends.

Ballad of Baby Doe (1956)
Libretto by John Latouche
Sarah Oseey Gardner
Effie Erin Kennedy
Sam Erikson Evans
Barnes Michael Elliott
Dana Nicole Harris
Augusta Tabor Linda Jackley
Horace Tabor Jonathan Napolier Morales
Baby Doe SherriAnn McKee

The Ballad of Baby Doe is loosely based on the life of Elizabeth McCourt (1854 - 1895) and premiered with the Central City Opera in Colorado in 1956. Horace Tabor, after years of struggling in the Colorado silver mines, has struck it rich in Leadville, Colorado. He seems to have all that life could offer, but his marriage to Augusta, is a disaster. It's been a pretty young woman, newly arrived in Leadville, and he is attentive to her. After that evening's opera performance, the Tabor's are seen taking leave of their guests. Augusta goes ahead to retire to the hotel, while Horace lingers behind. Two "ladies of the night" from the Leadville Hotel are gossiping about the newcomer. Baby Doe. The strains of an old folk song are heard as Baby Doe sings the "Willow Song," and Horace is drawn closer. He tells Baby Doe that her singing makes him recall old dreams and longings of things he once desired. Augusta calls for Horace interrupts their swarming love.

Susannah (1955)
Susannah Folk Cecilia Lopez
Ollie Bitch Genesis L. Brown

While a member of the piano faculty of Florida State University, Floyd adapted the Apocryphal tale of Susannah and the Elders into his third opera, Susannah. The opera received its world premiere at the University in 1955. Susannah lives alone in the mountains of Appalachia with her brother Sam. By chance, the young and beautiful girl is seen bathing in a brook in a secluded creek by the Elders of the community church. The sight of the innocent Susannah has aroused them and they condemn her as a harlot. At the reviving evening meeting, Reverend Bitch, a travelling preacher, has been influenced by the Elders and their wives, and leads the community in demanding that Susannah repent. Knowing that she is innocent, Susannah refuses and flees to the safety and comfort of her cabin. She sings an old folk song to her by her dead Mother. Bitch arrives and, intent on saving her soul emotionally exhausts Susannah. Bitch preys on his own feelings and seduces her.

Of Mice and Men (1979)
Adapted from John Steinbeck
Lennie John Mancbeni
George Michael Elliott

Floyd's fifth opera was composed in 1969 and first performed in 1970 by the Seattle Opera Company. George, a seasoned ranch hand and farm worker, has befriended Lennie, a mentally retarded young man of great strength. They are working and saving toward settling down on their own farm one day. Candy, another itinerant farm hand, overhears them discussing their venture, wants to join them, and puts up his savings with the others. Together, they believe they just might have enough money to "swing her!"

Lizzie Borden (1965)
Libretto by Kemnoud Emslie
Margaret Charlie Rollison
Lizzie Abigail (offstage) Stephanie Redman

Based on the real-life case of Lizzie Borden and the double-axe murder of her parents, Bessen called his opera a "Family Portrait." The opera was commissioned by the Ford Foundation and was premiered on March 25, 1965 by the New York City Opera. The Borden sisters, Lizzie and Margaret, have a dominating father and a new young stepmother, Abigail, who is continually tormenting the sisters. Lizzie has a suitor, a young sea captain named Jesse. Lizzie is glad for her sister's happiness, but is suspicious of pending interference from a jealous and vengeful Abigail. Margaret fears Lizzie's increasing hatred for their father and stepmother. Yet, this hatred propels Lizzie out of the house to help Margaret escape.

The Tender Land (1954)
Libretto Horace Everett (aka Erik Johns)
Grandpa Jonathan Napier Morales
Laurie Erin Kennedy
Ma Moss Nicole Harris

Copland's numberous and influential works encompass the Pulitzer Prize winning ballet score for Martha Graham's Appalachian Spring (1944) and the Academy Award winning film score for The Heiress (1949). Copland's second opera, The Tender Land, was commissioned by Rogers and Hammerstein. It was originally planned for the NBC Television Opera Workshop, however the opera was rejected by the television producers. At its premiere with the New York City Opera in 1954 the opera was criticized for a weak libretto. The party to celebrate Lauretta's graduation from High School is going on. Laurie thanks the guests, and casts a fond eye in the direction of Martin, one of two itinerant workers hired for the harvest. Mart, Lauretta's brother, provides a distraction by challenging everyone to a dance.

The Old Maid and the Thief (1939)
Miss Pinkerton SherriAnn McKee
Miss Todd Amanda Mura
Laetitia Charlie Rollison

Gian Carlo Menotti was born in Italy, but adopted America as his new homeland after 1928, when he enrolled at the Philadelphia Curtis Institute of Music. He was a Pulitzer Prize and Academy Award winning composer. The Old Maid and the Thief was composed specifically for a radio broadcast in 1939. It was first staged by the Philadelphia Opera Company in 1941. Miss Todd, a small town spinster, and her maid Laetitia, have surreptitiously taken a young and handsome drifter, Bob, into their household under the guise that he is Miss Todd's illegitimate. She hears from the town gossip, Miss Pinkerton, that a thief has broken out of jail and is in her area. Both women suspect Bob is the thief, but they've become infatuated with him. In order to convince him to stay they provide him not only with food and lodging, but also with money they've stolen from Miss Todd's neighbors. Bob is restless and makes plans to leave. The two women run a liquor store and convince Bob to stay. The next morning, Miss Pinkerton arrives, breathless with the latest news of the liquor store crime, surely done by the thief who is still at large. She also says that the police are going to search every house. Suddenly, a raucous song is heard from Miss Todd's "counter." Miss Pinkerton leaves to spread this newest bit of gossip, and Miss Todd makes plans to run away from the police. Laetitia and Miss Todd confront Bob saying they knew he was the thief all along and they must make their escape. Bob, however, proclaims his innocence and refuses to run away. The women confuses their mistakes on behalf of Bob and they say he should be the one going to jail. Miss Todd suggests that Bob is being very ungrateful and inconceivable of the love he has for her. When Bob retorts, "I don't love you at all," Miss Todd flies into a rage and determines to bring the police to arrest him.
The Ghosts of Versailles (1991)
Rosina Casey Gardner
Cherubino Cady Marshall
Marie Antoinette Wendy Moss
Beaumarchais Jonathan Napier Morales
King Louis XVI Erikson Franco
Ghosts Students of the Opera Workshop

The Metropolitan Opera Company commissioned the opera for its 100th Anniversary. After missing the planned premiere, it was finally produced on December 19, 1991. The ghosts of the court of Louis XVI have been haunting the palace of Versailles since their demise by guillotine during the French Revolution. Marie Antoinette is a sad ghost, and Beaumarchais has a plan to cheer and beguile the queen. He presents a flashback of the mutual seduction of Rosina and Cherubino in the gardens of Aquas Frescas in Seville, twenty years before the French Revolution. As Rosina and Cherubino move closer and closer together, Beaumarchais draws nearer to the queen. Rosina and Cherubino consummate the quartet with a kiss but the jealous husband and King Louis interrupts Beaumarchais and Marie Antoinette.

Little Women (1998)
Adapted from Louisa May Alcott
Gideon Genesis L. Brown
Jo Belinda Jackley
Beth Beverly Taflinger

The Houston Grand Opera commissioned Mark Adamo to compose an opera for its young artist program. The studio performances were so successful that the opera appeared as part of the Houston Grand Opera's regular season in 2000. In his composer's notes to the HGO program, Adamo describes his music as reflecting his love of "fioratura" vocal writing, pan-chromatic harmony, and American theater-song forms. And also, "for those scenes driven by language and story, rather than music and psychology, I concocted a variant of 18th-century recitative... crisply minimal, but made from a twelve-tone melody..." These he used extensively for the role of Jo. In this scene, Jo has been called home to the bedside of the seriously ill Beth.

The Seagull (1974)
Anton Chekhov, adapted by Kenward Elmslie
Constantin Brian Myer
Nina Sarah Fulco
Arkadina Amanda Mura
Shemrayeff Jonathan Napier Morales
Sorin Genesis L. Brown
Dr. Dora Erikson Franco
Pauline Nicole Harris

The Seagull had its world premiere at the Houston Grand Opera on March 5, 1974. Pasatieri made revisions for a production at the San Francisco Opera Center on April 23, 2004. In this scene, we are on the country estate of Sorin, whose sister, Arkadina is a former actress. Arkadina's son, Constantin, has written and directed an unconventional play that is being presented to guests staying at the estate. The play stars Nina, a young girl from a neighboring estate, as the "soul of the world." Arkadina laughs at his attempt to find a new theatrical form, finding it ridiculous and incomprehensible, while Constantin storms off in disgrace.

Candide (1957)
Adapted from Voltaire
Candide Jahmaul Bakare
Cunegonde Wendy Moss
Pacquette Isabella Ivy
Old Lady Belinda Jackley
Governor Erikson Franco
Maximilian Michael Elliot
Pangloss Brian Myer
Chorus Students of the Opera Workshop
UNLV Chamber Chorale

After surviving a series of misadventures, Candide and his cousin Cunégonde decide to settle down and buy a farm. Dr. Pangloss, their tutor, has convinced them that everything turns out for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

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