



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

November 12-13, 2010 7:30 p.m.  
Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall  
Lee and Thomas Beam Music Center

presents

## A Salute to American Opera

Luana DeVol, director

Cherié Roe, piano

### PROGRAM

George Gershwin  
(1898 – 1937)

*Porgy and Bess*  
Song Selections

Douglas Moore  
(1893 – 1969)

*Ballad of Baby Doe*  
Act I, Scene 2

Carlisle Floyd  
(b.1926)

*Susannah*  
Act II, Scene 3

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

Jack Beeson  
(1921 – 2010)

*Lizzie Borden*  
Act I, Scene 2

Aaron Copland  
(1900 – 1990)

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

### INTERMISSION

Gian Carlo Menotti  
(1911 – 2007)

*The Old Maid and the Thief*  
Scenes XI and XII

John Corigliano  
(b. 1938)

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

Mark Adamo  
(b.1968)

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

Thomas Pasatieri  
(b.1945)

*The Seagull*  
Act I  
“Alas, the stage”

Leonard Bernstein  
(1918 – 1990)

*Candide*  
Finale  
“Make our Garden Grow”



PROGRAM NOTES

Porgy and Bess (1935)

Libretto by Dubose Heyward and Ira Gershwin

Clara	Cecilia Lopez	Porgy	Genesis L. Brown
Jake	Brian Myer	Bess	Amanda Mura
Serena	Martha Banks	Sportin’ Life	Jahmaul Bakare

Dubose Heyward’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 Heyward and Gershwin’s brother, Ira, to create what he called an “American folk opera.” *Porgy and Bess* had its first performance in New York in the fall of 1935. The opera opens on “Catfish Row.” Clara sings a lullaby to her baby, “Summertime.” Jake, Clara’s husband, sings his own version of a lullaby, “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 mourns her husband singing “My 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 sneaks 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, 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 for New York to find her.

Ballad of Baby Doe (1956)

Libretto by John Latouche

Sarah	Casey Gardner	Mary	Danielle Toscano
Effie	Erin Kennelly	Emily	Cady Marshall
Sam	Erikson Franco	Bushy	John Mancheni
Barney	Michael Elliot	Jacob	Brian Myer
Kate	Nicole Harris	Meg	Stephanie Redman
Augusta Tabor	Linda Jackley		
Horace Tabor	Jonathan Napier Morales		
Baby Doe	Sherondah McKee		

The *Ballad of Baby Doe* is loosely based on the life of Elizabeth McCourt (1854 - 1935) 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 his wife, Augusta, is troubled. He’s seen a pretty young woman, newly arrived in Leadville, and he is attracted to her. After that evening’s opera performance, the Tabors are seen taking leave of their guests. Augusta goes ahead to retire to the hotel, while Horace lingers behind. Two “ladies of the night” leaving the Clarendon 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 calling for Horace interrupts their awakening love.

Susannah (1955)

Susannah Polk	Cecilia Lopez	Aria, “ <i>The Trees on the Mountain</i> ”
Olin Blitch	Genesis L. Brown	Duet, “ <i>That’s mighty pretty Singing</i> ”

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 was seen bathing nude 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 evil. At the revival meeting that evening, Reverend Blitch, a traveling 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 tune taught to her by her dead Mother. Blitch arrives and, intent on saving her soul emotionally exhausts Susannah. Blitch falls prey to his own feelings and seduces her.

Of Mice and Men (1970)

Adapted from John Steinbeck

Lennie	John Mancheni	Candy	Brian Myer
George	Michael Elliot		

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 Kenward Elmslie

Margaret	Charlie Rolison	Abigail (offstage)	Stephanie Redman
Lizzie	Isabella Ivy		

Based on the real-life case of Lizzie Borden and the double-axe murder of her parents, Beeson 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. Margaret has a suitor, a young sea captain named Jason. 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	Top	Michael Elliot
Mr. Jenkins	Brian Myer	Martin	Jahmaul Bakare
Laurie	Erin Kennelly	1 <sup>st</sup> Solo Man	John Mancheni
Ma Moss	Nicole Harris	2 <sup>nd</sup> Solo Man	Genesis L. Brown

Copland’s numerous 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 Laurie’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. Ma Moss, Laurie’s Mother, provides a distraction by challenging everyone to a dance.

The Old Maid and the Thief (1939)

Miss Pinkerton	Sherondah McKee	Bob	Michael Elliot
Miss Todd	Amanda Mura	Narrator	Brian Myer
Laetitia	Charlie Rolison		

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 1991. 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 ill cousin. They hear from the town gossip, Miss Pinkerton, that a thief has broken out of jail and is in their 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 rob a liquor store to 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 “cousin.” 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 confess their misdeeds on his behalf and Bob says they should be the ones going to jail. Miss Todd suggests that Bob is being very ungrateful and inconsiderate 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	Beaumarchais	Jonathan Napier Morales
Cherubino	Cady Marshall	King Louis XVI	Erikson Franco
Marie Antoinette	Wendy Moss	Ghosts	Students of the Opera Workshop

The Metropolitan Opera Company commissioned the opera for its 100<sup>th</sup> 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 close 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	Family Members and	
Jo	Belinda Jackley	Chorus	Students of the Opera Workshop
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 18<sup>th</sup>-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	Sorin	Genesis L. Brown
Nina	Sarah Fulco	Dr. Dorn	Erikson Franco
Arkadina	Amanda Mura	Pauline	Nicole Harris
Shemrayeff	Jonathan Napier Morales		

*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	Maximilian	Michael Elliot
Cunégonde	Wendy Moss	Pangloss	Brian Myer
Pacquette	Isabella Ivy	Chorus	Students of the Opera Workshop
Old Lady	Belinda Jackley		UNLV Chamber Chorale
Governor	Erikson Franco		

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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Wendy Moss and Richard Weiss – Curtain Raiser Organizers  
Wendy Moss, Amanda Mura, Isabella Ivy, Linda Jackley, Mike Elliot,  
Brian Myer, John Mancheni – Curtain Raiser Singers

Randy Hughes – Stage Manager  
Cherié Roe and Karen McCann – Musical Preparation  
Danielle Toscano – Poster Design  
Cady Marshall and Librarians Cheryl and Kathleen – Music Material  
Haik Goomroyan – Train Wreck Preventer and Set-Up