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

PROGRAM
George Gershwin
(1898 – 1937)

Douglas Moore
(1893 – 1969)

Carlisle Floyd
(b. 1926)

Jack Beeson
(1921 – 2010)

Aaron Copland
(1900 – 1990)

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 (1953)
Libretto by Dubose Heyward and Ira Gershwin
Clara — Cecilia Lopez
Jake — Brian Myer
Serena — Martha Parks
Porgy — Genesis L. Brown
Bess — Amanda Mura
Sportin’ Life — Jalmeh Bakare

Adapted from John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men (1937)
Lennie — John Mancheni
George — Michael Elliot

Susannah is a hideous, bony-faced young woman, newly arrived in Leadville, and he is attracted to her. After that evening’s opening performance, the Tokars are seen taking leaves of their guests. Auguste goes abroad to retire to the hotel, while Horace lingers behind. Two "ladies of the night" on the Cherillon 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. Auguste calling for her introduces her captivating love.

Suzannah (1955)
Susannah Polk — Cecilia Lopez
Effie — Arianna Aria
Olin Blitch — Genesis L. Brown

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. He seems to have all that life could offer, but his marriage to his wife, Auguste, is troubled. He’s seen a pretty young woman, newly arrived in Leadville, and he is attracted to her. After that evening’s opening performance, the Tokars are seen taking leaves of their guests. Auguste goes abroad to retire to the hotel, while Horace lingers behind. Two "ladies of the night" on the Cherillon 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. Auguste calling for her introduces her captivating love.

Suzannah Polk — Cecilia Lopez
Effie — Arianna Aria
Olin Blitch — Genesis L. Brown

While a member of the piano faculty of Florida State University, Floyd adapted the Apocryphal tale of Suzannah and the Elders into his third opera, Suzannah. The opera received its world premiere at the University in 1955. Suzannah lives alone in the mountains of Appalachia with her brother Sam. By chance, the young and beautiful girl is seen bathing naked in a sacred creek by the Elders of the community church. The sight of the innocent Suzannah 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 Suzannah repent. Knowing that she is innocent, Suzannah 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 Suzannah. Blitch preys on her own feelings and seduces her.

Of Mice and Men (1937)
Adapted from John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men (1937)
Lennie — John Mancheni
George — Michael Elliot
Candy — Brian Myer

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, overpowers 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!”
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 Aguas 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
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
Semyonoff 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
Cunégonde 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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