



Gateway Performance Series
2009-2010 Season

From Our Lips to God's Ear

Members of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera

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Friday, December 11, 2009, 8 p.m.
Sanctuary of Gateway Christian Church
11760 Gateway Boulevard, Los Angeles

www.gatewayperformanceseries.org

Program

Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera

Co-Founder and Artistic Director: Ella Lee Romani

Co-Founder and CEO: Linda Jackson

From Our Lips to God's Ear

Alleluia (from <i>Exsultate, jubilate</i>)	W.A. Mozart
Selections from <i>Tosca</i> Te Deum E lucevan le stelle Vissi d'arte	Giacomo Puccini
Selections from <i>Carmen</i> Je dis Toreador Song	Georges Bizet
~ Intermission ~	
One Hand, One Heart (from <i>West Side Story</i>)	Leonard Bernstein
Pace pace (from <i>La forza del destino</i>)	Giuseppe Verdi
Selections from <i>La bohème</i> Che gelida manina O soave fanciulla Musetta's Waltz	Giacomo Puccini
Hallelujah (from <i>Messiah</i>)	George Handel

Linda Jackson, soprano
Diana Briscoe, soprano
Miguel Vargas, tenor
Gabriel Manro, baritone
Dr. Alan Chan, piano
Nani Sinha, subtitle projection

Total duration of tonight's program is 90 minutes (with 10-minute intermission).
All audience members are welcome to join our performers at the reception following the concert.
Program is subject to change.

Introduction by Matthew Thomas

Although opera is known primarily as secular entertainment, the repertoire is ripe with scenes in which characters offer up heartfelt pleas to God. Tonight's program presents a collection of prayerful arias and duets from well-known operas interspersed with other perennial favorites.

Alleluia comes from the Hebrew word for "praise" and appears often in the Psalms of David. The program begins with Mozart's joyful setting of the **Alleluia** from the three-movement work *Exsultate, jubilate* (Rejoice, be glad) composed in 1780. The virtuosic vocal part was written for the castrato Venanzio Rauzinni who played a lead role in Mozart's opera *Lucio Silla* the previous year. More recently, it was sung by soprano Rebecca Sjöwall at my wedding.

Though often overlooked by musicologists, the operas of Giacomo Puccini continue to delight audiences around the world. At the end of the first act of Puccini's opera *Tosca*, the Italians gather to celebrate the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte. As the congregations sing a **Te Deum**, a hymn thanking God for victory, the jealous police chief Scarpia sings an aria telling of his intention to steal the enchanting diva Tosca from the arms of his rival Cavaradossi.

Imprisoned and sentenced to death, Cavaradossi composes a farewell letter to Tosca, which he narrates in his aria **E lucevan le stelle**. As her lover is being tortured in the next room, Tosca is brought in for questioning by Scarpia. Tosca attempts to maintain composure during her interrogation as she sings of her love of music in the aria **Vissi d'arte**. Apparently, Puccini initially disliked the aria because it interrupted the dramatic flow of the opera. He changed his mind when the soprano soloist fell off the couch during rehearsal one day and sang the number from the floor. Puccini replied, "That's good. It gives the aria some life."

Set in Spain during the 1830s, Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen* tells the story of an enchanting and temperamental Gypsy girl. In the second act, a bullfighter named Escamillo boasts of his prowess in the **Toreador song** and attempts, unsuccessfully, to seduce Carmen. Instead, Carmen falls in love with a soldier named Don José and in the third act, the jealous Micaëla vows to split them up in her aria **"Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante."**

Leonard Bernstein's classic musical *West Side Story* is a retelling of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* set in New York City during the 1950s. In this scene, the star-crossed lovers Maria and Tony sneak into a shop and hold a mock wedding. After they recite their vows, they sing the stirring duet **"One Hand, One Heart."** At the end of the duet, listen for echoes of Tony's song "Maria" in the piano accompaniment.

Introduction (con't)

The *preghiera* (prayer scene) is a convention in Verdi's operas that usually features the leading lady offering up a bedside prayer before her impending death. In the final act of Verdi's opera *La forza del destino* (The Force of Destiny) Leonora cries out to God in the aria ***Pace, pace mio Dio!*** before she is stabbed to death by her brother Alvaro.

Puccini's opera *La bohème* begins with a flirtatious encounter between the struggling poet Rudolfo and the seamstress Mimì. Rudolfo introduces himself in a lyrical aria, ***Che gelida manina*** that allows the tenor soloist to show off his upper range. Next, the couple sings a charming duet entitled ***O soave fanciulla***. In the second act, the jilted singer Musetta attempts to catch the attention of her ex-boyfriend Marcello in her aria *Quando me n'vò*, known as **Musetta's waltz**.

During the mid 1700s, the German composer George Frideric Handel became famous for delighting English audiences with his Italian operas. When the popularity of Italian opera in England began to wane, Handel shifted his focus to the genre of the oratorio, which had the same elements as opera but with English texts adapted from the Bible. One of the best-known works in the classical repertoire is Handel's oratorio *Messiah*, which was first performed for a charity concert in Ireland in 1742. When he first heard the ***Hallelujah Chorus*** at a performance of *Messiah*, the English King George II was inspired to stand, prompting the rest of the audience to follow his lead. We continue to observe this tradition tonight as we invite you to stand and sing this famous chorus.

In Handel's oratorios, the choruses represent the collective voice of the faithful and the audience is often invited to join in during annual *Messiah* sing-alongs. As we raise our voices in song, we temporarily abandon our sense of self and are united in collective praise of God's infinite blessings.

Notes by Matthew Thomas

Matthew Alan Thomas is a doctoral candidate in musicology at the University of Southern California and currently teaches music appreciation at Pasadena City College. He regularly contributes program notes to the annual Mozart Woche in Salzburg, Austria. As a tenor, he sings with the Los Angeles Master Chorale and La Cañada Presbyterian Church.

Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera

Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera is the newest addition to LA's cultural industry bringing to you opera performances by the area's best professional singers, directors, designers and musicians. Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera was founded in 2008 by sopranos Ella Lee and Linda Jackson to bring affordable local professional opera performances to LA and surrounding areas.

Linda Jackson, award-winning soprano, composer and arranger, has recorded numerous vocals for television, film and radio. Her television credits include Loni Anderson's *Easy Street*, *Time Cops* and Disney's *PB & J Otter* among many others. Film credits include *Play It to the Bone*, *Rosewood* and *Fatal Attraction*. You've heard her vocals on radio promotions for Wrigley's chewing gum, California Egg Council (for which she received a Clio Award) and ad campaigns in the U.S., Asia and Europe. Ms Jackson also arranged vocals for theatre for Diavolo Dance Troupe and the Odyssey Theater's *Avenue X*, for which she won the BackStage West award for "Best Musical Direction." Most recently, she has performed leading roles, Elisabetta in Verdi's *Don Carlo* with the Verdi Opera Company, and Donna Elvira in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Palisades Symphony. Ms Jackson has sung as guest soloist for the Los Angeles Concert Orchestra, San Fernando Valley Symphony, St. Gregory Chamber Orchestra and the City of Bellflower Symphony Orchestra. Ms Jackson received her B.A. in vocal performance from UCLA and received her M.M. at California State University, Northridge where she studied with Dr. David Scott.

Diana Briscoe recently performed the role of Musetta in Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera's debut performance of *La bohème*. "Briscoe pulled out all the stops, playing Musetta as the sexy provocateur who drives Marcello to fits. Her soprano was up to the demands of this character role," as stated by critic Libby Motika. This year she has performed as the vixen chanteuse for Kirk Smith's musical review, *Standard Men* at the Sierra Madre playhouse and The Raven Playhouse in North Hollywood. She premiered the role of the Mother Goddess Bridget in Melissa Brown and Mary Weber's play, *Enchanted Winter Solstice* this past December at the Actors Forum Theatre and also performed the role of Queen Cassandra in Jonathan Price's new chamber opera, *The Queen and the Dragon*, part of the NOHO Mini Musical Festival this past summer. She has performed with Opera Pasadena, Southern California Lyric Theatre, Opera of the Foothills, Repertory Opera, Celestial Opera, and Intimate Opera Company in opera and concert. Ms Briscoe has also performed the roles of Victorian School Teacher and Opera Singer in, *This is not a Pipe Dream* at Barnsdall Art Park's Shakespeare in the Park series and performed improv with G City's Improv Theatre at Theatre West. Upcoming engagements include Violetta in *La Traviata*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan Tutti* and Tosca in *Tosca* with the Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera.

Artists

Miguel Vargas began his musical studies at the age of six even though it was said he could sing the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *Messiah* at age two. Coming from a musical family, he was encouraged to play musical instruments of all types. Though a classically trained musician, he is just as comfortable singing Broadway or Jazz and has sung with many of the local companies and churches in the Los Angeles area. Some roles have included Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Manrico in *Il Trovatore*, Frederick in *Pirates of Penzance*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* in title role. Miguel is looking forward to his debut as Alfredo with the Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera.

Gabriel Manro made his professional operatic debut as Third Inmate in Jake Heggie's ground breaking new opera *Dead Man Walking* for Opera Pacific with Frederica von Stade. He immediately went on to perform the role of Inquisitor in Opera Pacific's critically acclaimed production of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*. His recent roles have included Sergente in *La bohème* with John Mauceri's Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and Silvio in *Pagliacci* at the Long Beach Music Festival. With the California Opera Theater, he has sung Valentin in *Faust*, Sharpless in *Madame Butterfly*, Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Marcello in *La bohème*. Mr. Manro made his European operatic debut in Rossini's comic opera, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* as Doctor Bartolo with Corfu Opera in Greece. His operatic engagements have also included performances of Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Guglielmo in *Così fan Tutte*, and Superintendent Budd in *Albert Herring*. Also a sought after soloist in Oratorio, he has appeared in the Brahms Requiem, Mozart Requiem, Bach B minor Mass, Mozart's Coronation Mass, Handel's *Messiah*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, and Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* with such arts organizations as the Coastal Valleys Symphony, San Fernando Valley Master Chorale, Los Angeles Premiere Chorale and Southern Nevada Arts Society Chorus.

Alan Chan is the Composer-in-Residence at Gateway Christian Church. His music has been recognized with honors from the American Music Forum, ASCAP, Percussive Arts Society, Society of Composers, Inc., among others. Chan has received commissions from organizations such as Composers' Forum of the East (Vermont), Melody of China (San Francisco), Snell Duo (Kansas City) and Lien Percussion Ensemble (Taiwan).

His piano mentors include Cuban American pianist Rosalina Sackstein, a student of Claudio Arrau. An experienced accompanist, he has performed in many of his own music and vocal recitals in the United States and abroad, including Lin-iiin Chang's vocal recital at Taiwan National Recital Hall in Taipei, Taiwan. Ella Lee Romani and Courtney Huffman are some of the renowned singers with whom he has collaborated. Visit www.alanchanmusic.com.

Upcoming Events

Feb 27, 2010 - Vientos Trio

This exciting program will feature newly commissioned pieces by some of our favorite young composers: **Damian Montano**, **Jorge Variego** and **Jenni Brandon**. With pieces as wildly diverse and intriguing as the composers themselves, this concert will explore how composition today is impacted not by schools of thought, formal conventions or a war of tonality vs. atonality, but by each composer's unique personality and viewpoint. Composers will be on hand to comment on their pieces during the program, as well as interact with audience members after the performance.

Mar 13, 2010 - Gateway Gallery – Gino Ng: Journey of Light

During the GPS season, *Gateway Gallery* will present photo works by designer/photographer **Gino Ng**, taken during his journey to Israel, Tibet and Vietnam. The *Prelude* exhibition will begin on 11/8/2009. Mr. Ng will speak at the official opening of the exhibition on Saturday, 3/13/2010, at 4pm. Admission for this event is free.

Apr 10, 2010 - Gateway *Multimedia* Initiative (Alan Chan, curator)

Gateway Initiative is a platform for artists from multiple disciplines to forge collaborative works through innovative programming. Those enlisted include percussionist **Yuri Inoo**, marimbist **Naoko Takada** (from Young Concert Artist), flutist **Angela Rowland** (Kansas City), soprano **Courtney Huffman** (Boston, via video), poet **Nicky Schildkraut** and designer **Gino Ng** (New York). This adventurous program features contemporary works by Bresnick, Chan, Dahl, Psathas and Sejourne. Poet Nicky Schildkraut will present her new *Subaltern* serial poem by incorporating reading, singing, music and film.

May 22, 2010 - Israelievitch / Matsumoto

Evening of violin sonatas by French composers performed by French violinist **Jacques Israelievitch**. Born in Cannes, France and currently residing in Toronto, Canada, Mr. Israelievitch is recognized as one of the most distinguished performing artists in North America and abroad. He is joined by aspiring pianist, **Kanae Matsumoto**, whose performance was described as “unfailingly crisp, warm and sensitive” (showtimemagazine.ca). The program contains pieces influenced by French Impressionism and American jazz: full of colors, rhythm, and fun!

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We invite you to help us meet our goal of securing enough funding to make this series a resounding success. Ticket Sales for each of the performances will cover some of the costs, with the balance of our Series budget needing to be met through donations. All donors will be acknowledged in the individual programs, and will receive a letter for tax deduction purposes.

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