

New England Opera Club



New England Opera Club Newsletter

Logo by Barbara Winston

Date: June 3, 2018
Time: 2:00 - 4:00 PM

Place: Newton Free Library
330 Homer Street, Newton, MA 617.796.1360

A TRIBUTE TO GREEK-AMERICAN OPERA LEGEND MARIA CALLAS

ON THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF HER DEATH



Cecilia Sofia Anna Maria Kalogeropoulou (1923 – 1977) was born in New York City of Greek immigrant parents. Shortly thereafter, her father shortened and Americanized the family name to Callas. As **Maria Callas**, she would become the most famous opera singer of her time and one of the most influential of all time.

Perhaps one of the greatest sopranos of the 20th century died feeling friendless and unsure of her legacy. Those of us who never heard her live must rely on the stories and on the incomparable recordings and rare videos.

Speaker: Erika Reitshamer was born and educated in Germany and is an engaging teacher whose knowledge and love of opera will inspire all, and her open style and sense of humor are irresistible. She has lectured on opera and great singers of opera for many years and was active in the formation of the Boston Lyric Opera Company more than 40 years ago. She is a board member of the New England Opera Club, former VP of the Boston Wagner Society and teacher of opera appreciation for LLARC at Regis College, Newton Lifelong Learning and the towns of Sherborn and Sharon. Her last offering for Newton Library was *Bring on the Operatic Baritones!*

Directions and parking:

- **FROM NORTH, SOUTH, WEST:** Best route to Route 128. Proceed on Route 128 to Exit 24 (Route 30/ Commonwealth Avenue). At the end of the exit ramp, turn right onto Route 30 and go EAST towards Newton and Boston. Proceed on Route 30 for 3.1 miles and bear right at the traffic light onto Homer Street.
- **FROM EAST:** Take the Mass Pike or Commonwealth Avenue west towards Newton. Leave the Mass Pike at Exit 17 (Newton-Watertown). Stay in the middle lane at the end of the exit ramp and go straight ahead onto Washington Street. Continue on Washington Street for 1.3 miles to Walnut Street. Turn left onto Walnut Street and drive south for 1.1 miles to Homer Street. Turn right onto Homer Street and drive past the Library to the adjacent parking lot on the left.
- If you take Commonwealth Avenue, continue west from Boston or Brookline through Newton until you reach Walnut Street (about 2 miles into Newton). Turn left onto Walnut Street and drive one block to Homer Street. (You will see the library across the street at the corner of Homer and Walnut Streets). Turn right onto Homer Street and drive past the library to the adjacent parking lot on the left.

The Library is fully handicap-accessible

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Annual Membership:

\$40 for each individual
/ \$45 for a couple at
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\$15 student with valid
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2018 NEOC Programs
(listings are subject to change)

July - no presentation

August 12
Bill Cotten, speaker

During the month of July the New England
Opera Club will take a break from our
monthly activities.

We hope all our members will enjoy their own
summer / vacation plans.

We look forward to Bill Cotten's talk on August 12. The
topic is still to be announced, but Bill's presentations are
always enjoyable! For instance, his last presentation in
August 2017: *Great Singers on Television...* read about it at
neoperaclub.org/newsletters/august2017.pdf



Boheme and Beer:
An Unconventional Production by Boston Opera Collaborative

*Posted by Kristin Tomecek on 15th Apr 2018 on the Theatre Times web site:
<https://thetheatretimes.com>*

Audiences found themselves amidst fermentation vessels and set dressings
alike this past Thursday at Turtle Swamp Brewing in Jamaica Plain for the
opening night of Boston Opera Collaborative's modern take on Puccini's
popular *La Boheme*. From Musetta's waltz to the lovers' duet, this timeless
piece is a favorite amongst opera-lovers, with melodies that ring in your
ears and pulse through your heart long after they are over.

Overall, this modern treatment was a valiant effort to reconceive this classic
with a talented cast of young artists in an alternative space. Despite
questionable musical and directorial choices, the astounding energy of these
performers is what made this production a memorable one.

In a tale as old as time, *La Boheme* follows a pair of poor young lovers and
their friends as they seek companionship in the dead of winter and freedom
from one another in spring, only to be brought together by the bonds of
passion and tragedy by its heartrending conclusion. The most frequently
performed opera worldwide, *La Boheme* is familiar to opera-goers and
newcomers alike. If any opera can be adapted without losing the integrity of
youthful artistry, it is this one. The cast stepped up to the challenge of
characters who countless opera superstars have championed, crafting
performances that settled nicely in the intimate space.

Creating a self-proclaimed "site-specific opera," space was undoubtedly the
primary concern of the creative team. Known for his work with
experimental theatre, BOC artistic director Greg Smucker was poised to
create something fresh and innovative with this beloved masterpiece. Set in
present-day Boston, the brewery transformed into a contemporary flat with

Past Presidents

William Miranda
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*The mission of this
nonprofit association
is educational:
To promote
appreciation of the art
of opera; to support
performances of
quality opera in New
England; to
encourage talented
students in their
pursuit of operatic
careers.*

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Jacopo Peri Award

*The NEOC
frequently honors
a person who has
made a
significant
contribution to the
local opera scene.*

Eunice Alberts
John Balme
Scott Brumit
Sarah Caldwell
Schuyler Chapin
Carole Charnow
Richard Conrad
Federico Cortese
Patricia Craig and
Richard Cassilly
Phyllis Curtin
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Sharon Daniels
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Ron Della Chiesa
D'Anna Fortunato
Randolph J. Fuller
Boris Goldovsky
Donald Gramm
Roland Hayes
Robert Honeysucker
Norman Kelley
Stephen Lord
William Miranda
John Moriarty
Esther Nelson
Martin Pearlman
Bradley Pennington
Jeffrey Rink
Eleanor Steber
Susan Stone
John M. Tischio
Ernest Triplett

large curtains splattered with paint masking the large conditioning tanks of the brewery. The space is clearly an homage to the Bohemian spirit of youthful resourcefulness and grit. While it does not lend itself to the bombastic theatricality of Act II's chorus scenes or the dramatic orchestral climaxes of the ensemble numbers, it provides a powerful intimacy to the love story as the tragedy unfolds before us.

While an unconventional venue for an opera of this size, Smucker's production is not unheard of in the realm of new wave opera directors. Taking its cue from operaUpClose's infamous 2009 production of Puccini's classic in a North West London pub, the Boston Opera Collaborative seeks to achieve the same edgy popularity. While operaUpClose took home the Best New Opera award from the Olivers that year, an updated production staged at a brewery offers its own risks nonetheless.

Before the show began, Smucker warned the audience of 60 to anticipate "a few noises you wouldn't normally hear in a theatre." Cue the constant hum of something-or-other that became part of the bizarre soundtrack of the production. The sparse seven-piece orchestra was an underwhelming mismatch to Puccini's lush score, its intricacies often lost in the small ensemble, but not for lack of trying. This was especially felt in Rodolfo's famous aria "Che gelida manina," when a piano reduction replaced the sweeping strings. Yet this did not faze tenor Francis Rogers, who shone as the lovesick poet Rodolfo. A delightfully cutting tone paired with attentive phrasing filled the space without overwhelming the listener. Smucker remarked that he wanted the audience to "see the eyes and the faces of the singer-actors." While Rogers' expression sometimes did not match the fervor of his voice in solos and duets, he came alive in the scenes with Marcello (Andrew Miller,) Colline (Seth Grondin,) and Schaunard (Mitch FitzDaniel.) This well-characterized quartet with delightful chemistry imbibed a youthful



photo copywrite Dan Busler

energy to the starving artists, even engaging in a pantomimed light saber battle at the top of the fourth act. Despite overpowering Celeste Godin's floating soprano in Act III's "Addio" duet, Rogers' rendition of the painful final cries lifted the audience from their seats, beers held precariously in hand.

A few changes were made to Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa's libretto to include references to local Boston, such as "the smell of empanadas in the streets of Jamaica Plain" rather than the perfume of fritters in the Latin Quarter. Mercifully, Colline did not exchange his coat for a Bruins jersey and no Red Sox cap was to be found in the garret, though the "feast of plenty" did consist of Cheese Nips and Oreos.

Act II found the audience on stage as part of the rambunctious Café Mamus, though it is meant

to be understood as Turtle Swamp itself. The chorus of seven weaved through the tables, platters and wine in hand. The sparse ensemble and the immersion into the crowd swallowed and splintered the sound, losing the grandiosity of the scene. The chorus was the most unrealized aspect of the production, the characters unspecific apart from the vendor Parpignol (dressed as Santa Claus) and the children's chorus was sorely missed. Carina DiGianfilippo commanded the stage as the flirtatious Musetta, hamming up her performance of the opera's most famous aria "Quando m'en vo'" with comedic physicality. Basking in the energy of an adoring audience and well-lit by designer David Orlando, DiGianfilippo was a vision.

Celeste Godin was sublime as the humble, ill-fated Mimi. Singing every phrase with remarkable control, particularly in her high tessitura, Godin had the perfect voice for the space. While she sometimes got lost in the larger ensemble pieces, she never faltered in her graceful portrayal of this iconic role. She infused every word with character, developing a shy dreamer who had the audience sighing with each reprisal of "Si, mi chiamano Mimi," leaning in until her dying breath.

Intimate and full of heart, Boston Opera Collaborative's updated production of *La Boheme* did its best with a pared down version of Puccini's masterpiece but was felt the most in its principle cast of young people seeking friendship and love.

Kristin Tomecek: k.tomecek@thetheatretimes.com

♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ **Opera Diary** ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

Local Opera and Classical Music, June 2018

For up-to-date activities, visit FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/NEOperaevents/>
Join NEOC! Visit operaclub.org/membership.html

June 3, 2:30 PM

Longwood Opera and NEGASS | *Iolanthe*, Gilbert & Sullivan | free, in concert; audience invited to sing chorus
Christ Episcopal Church, 1132 Highland Avenue, Needham, MA | progchair@negass.org, longwoodopera.org

June 3, 9:00 PM

WCRB 99.5: Voices with Chris Vos | *Mass in Time of War*, Hayden

June 5, 7:00 PM

Seven Times Salt | *Easy as Lying: The Music of Shakespeare's Globe*, Morley, Dowland, Johnson and others
Apple Tree Arts, 1 Grafton Common, Grafton | 508.839.4649, graftonlibrary.org/events/

June 7, 6:00 PM

Boston Lyric Opera & Castle of Our Skins | *Showcasing the lives and stories of Frederick Douglass, Harriet and Paul Robeson through the music of opera*
Boston Public Library, West End Branch, 151 Cambridge Street, Boston | 617-523-3957, www.castleskins.org

June 7 & 9, 8 PM; June 10, 2 PM

Opera 51 | *Faust*, Gounod
51 Walden Performing Arts Center, 51 Walden Street, Concord | 978-369-7911, opera51.org/faust18

June 9-24 7:30 or 2 PM

Greater Worcester Opera | *Don Giovanni*, Mozart
Varied performance spaces, dates, & times (see below) | greaterworcesteropera.org/events.html
June 9 (7:30) Stage concert performance with piano at Southgate, 30 Julio Drive, Shrewsbury
June 14 (7:30) Cover artists performance with piano, Loring Auditorium, 65 Briarwood Circle, Worcester
June 16 (7:30) Staged concert performance with Worcester Chamber Society members at Razzo Hall at the Traina Center at Clark University, 92 Downing Street, Worcester
June 22 (7:30) Fully staged performance, Worcester Chamber Society members; Zecco Theatre, Anna Maria College, 50 Sunset Lane, Paxton
June 24 (2:00) Fully staged performance at Anna Maria College

June 10, 3:00 PM

Quartet Fin de Siecle | *Kindertotenlieder*, Mahler
First Church in Wenham, Main and Arbor Streets, Wenham | bostonsingersresource.org/postings/events/show/11962/

June 10, 9:00 PM

WCRB 99.5: Voices with Chris Vos | *Missa longa in C*, Mozart

June 13, 8:00 PM

Guerilla Opera | *Emergence I*, excerpts from works by Mischa Salkind-Pearl, Marti Epstein, & Per Bloland
OBERON, 2 Arrow Street, Cambridge | 617-547-8300, guerillaopera.org/

June 17, 9:00 PM

WCRB 99.5: Voices with Chris Vos | *Mass in C major*, Beethoven

June 21, 27, 28 at 7:30 PM; June 22, 23, 29, 30 at 8:00 PM; June 24 at 3:00 PM

Opera Hub/DIVA Museum | *DIVAS: How Opera Divas Changed the World! - Art. History. Women. Opera. Fashion: 1700-1920*, by Laura Neill, inspired by the work of NEOC's Kathleen McDermott
BCA Plaza Theater, 539 Tremont St, Boston | hautehistory.com/diva-museum.html

June 24, 9:00 PM

WCRB 99.5: Voices with Chris Vos | *Mass in C major*, Schubert

June 25, 5:30 PM

Opera on Tap | *The French Riviera Sunday Night at the Opera - combining great music with an Italian three-course dinner* |
Stellina Restaurant, 47 Main Street, Watertown, MA | \$55 per person | reservations: **617-924-9475**,
stellinarestaurant.com/sunday-june-24-sunday-night-at-the-opera-visits-the-french-riviera/