

WHEN A SHOW IS IN PRODUCTION, WHAT MIGHT A TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

A typical production day is about 12-15 hours. This includes building any necessary pieces (wigs, facial hair, prosthetics), setting and styling the wigs, running errands, figuring out make-up call times, understanding and implementing backstage paperwork, and writing notes if we need to change things as the process moves along. Many times we take work home with us so we can finish building wigs before the first dress rehearsal. It is a very busy lifestyle.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE SHOWS TO WORK ON?

My favorite productions are ones in which the costume designer and director are very in sync and open minded concerning design



Alison Mizerski applies make-up to Corey McKern, who portrayed Count Almaviva in Opera Cleveland's *Le nozze di Figaro*.

and creativity. I recently did a Baroque opera in Central City called *Rinaldo*, in which there was everything from a sea siren with an orange mohawk and crying blue tears, to an old man wearing dreadlocks down to his waist, to four zombie creatures covered in blood and scars with their mouths and eyes sewn shut.

When somebody tells me, "Go for it, do what you do," I am happiest. The classic-looking operas such as *Madama Butterfly* are beautiful, and I love doing them, but when somebody just lets go of any preconceived notions of what characters are supposed to look like, I have a blast and get to go straight to my imagination.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB?

It is trying to balance what I would like to see, while honoring the director's vision of what he/she wants, along with making the singer comfortable as we merge those two concepts together. The main goal, the main purpose, is to make the singer come alive in his/her role. However I can facilitate that transition is the most important part of my job. If they thank me and say it helped them in some small way, that they were comfortable or enjoyed their look, I've done what I'm supposed to do.

Read the full interview with Alison online at operacleveland.org.



Alison Mizerski designed the wig and make-up for the Sandman in Opera Cleveland's *Hansel and Gretel*.

Opera CLEVELAND

DON GIOVANNI PRE-OPERA TALKS

Enrich your opera-going experience with fascinating insights into *Don Giovanni*. Join us one hour prior to each curtain for our Pre-Opera Talk in the State Theatre. Free to all ticket holders.

AFTER THE SHOW

After the curtain goes down, stick around and ask away. Following select performances, Dean Williamson will lead an interesting and informal discussion about the production.

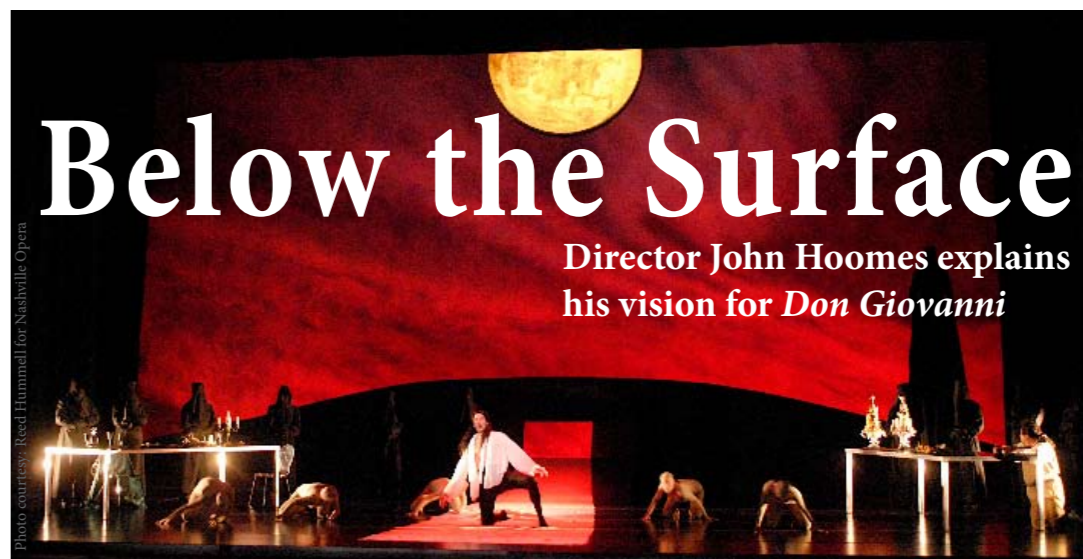
OCT. 30, NOV. 1 & 7

1422 Euclid Ave, Suite 1052 • Cleveland, OH 44115

Non-profit Org.
US Postage Paid
Cleveland, OH
Permit # 3194

opera cleveland **BRAVO!**

VOL. 3, 2009 • www.operacleveland.org



The production of *Don Giovanni* you will see at Opera Cleveland is an original creation that started about four years ago. I was originally asked to create a new production of the opera for The Florentine Opera in Milwaukee. I worked with acclaimed set designer Kris Stone and visionary lighting designer Noele Stollmack to create a new and striking interpretation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The goal was to put together a bold, visual language in which to tell the tale but to still maintain the ideas and integrity of Mozart's opera.

Probing the subconscious

While the music and costuming are kept in a more traditional vein, the lighting, set designs, and dramatic landscape are intentionally much less realistic. The world of this opera is set in an abstract playing field where each character must confront his/her own inner demons. On the surface, *Don Giovanni* is the simple story of a great seducer, but one of the many subtexts of the opera dwells upon the personal secrets and desires that people keep hidden deep inside themselves.

The character of Don Giovanni often acts as a subconscious mirror in which the other characters must deal with what they see reflected. (Does the peasant girl Zerlina really love Masetto and is just flirting with Giovanni to make him jealous? What really happened in the bedroom with Giovanni

continued inside ⇨

FACE OFF

A conversation with Wig and Make-up Designer Alison Mizerski

Many elements conspire to make singers' characters come to life. The artistry behind the make-up on their faces and hair on their heads is sometimes subtle, sometimes ostentatious. Whether she's making up a peasant woman or a bloodied zombie Wig and Make-up Designer Alison Mizerski has careful consideration in her craft. She has worked with Opera Cleveland for the last three years, as well as companies such as Central City Opera, Washington Opera, Florentine Opera, Nevada Opera, and Nashville Opera.

WHAT EXPERIENCE OR TRAINING LED TO YOUR CAREER?

I have a degree in theatre and studied costuming. When I did a costuming internship with Des Moines Opera one summer, I met the wig and make-up staff and became transfixed. I begged them to let me intern for them. A degree in theatre helps because you learn all the backstage basics. But my path was training through observation, being taught by some great designers and then developing my own aesthetic as I moved on. A lot of it is self taught. I constantly look at pictures of hair, make-up, and other designers' work. I study a lot of fashion and artwork, determining what is considered "beautiful" in our current time period. I then try to translate that to assimilate with what is correct for the periods that the shows are set in.

continued on back page ⇨

MEET the CAST of *Don Giovanni*

Saturday, Oct. 17 at 7:30 pm

Joseph-Beth Booksellers, Legacy Village



Find out more about the cast of *Don Giovanni* at this casual, fun event. Dean Williamson will moderate the discussion, which is FREE and open to the public.

SHOP ALL DAY, SUPPORT THE OPERA!

20% of your bookstore purchases on Oct. 17 will go to Opera Cleveland.

Just Say GO!

GO!, Generation Opera, is a new affiliate group of Opera Cleveland targeted to those between the ages of 25-50. The purpose of GO! is to connect those in the Greater Cleveland area through artistic, cultural, and social networking outlets by inviting them to explore, discover, and experience opera. A number of interested people have been meeting regularly over the past few months to plan programs. To find out more, visit www.operacleveland.org.

DON'T BE SHY
Tell us what you really think!

Opera Cleveland will have an online patron survey available starting Nov. 1. Keep an eye out for the link at operacleveland.org. If you do not have Internet access, you can request a paper copy by calling 216.575.0903, ext. 249. Leave your name and address after the message.

Opening Night
DINNER

Celebrate Opening Night of *Don Giovanni* on Friday, Oct.30 at the Wyndham Hotel with our Opening Night Dinner. Cocktails begin at 5:30 pm, with dinner at 6 pm. RSVP to Steve Borstein at 216.575.0903, ext. 234 or borstein@operacleveland.org.

BRAVO! is published periodically by Opera Cleveland

WILL COLE
Executive Director
216.575.0903, ext. 232

DEAN WILLIAMSON
Artistic Director
216.575.0903, ext. 219

LISA HOFMANN
Editor
PR & Communications Manager
216.575.0903, ext. 216

Opera Cleveland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.
1422 Euclid Avenue, Suite 1052,
Cleveland, OH 44115
www.operacleveland.org



UNDERWRITERS



2010-11 The Season Ahead

BY DEAN WILLIAMSON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

As artistic director, it's been incredibly gratifying to read and hear your comments about singers, repertoire, orchestra, and productions. In choosing our 2010-11 season titles, we carefully considered our patrons' requests.

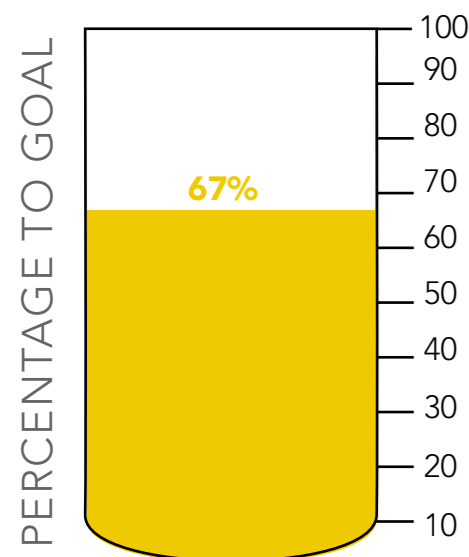
In our recent audience survey, three titles kept coming up: Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*, and Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*. I was very happy to program these operas, as they differ greatly in

scope and have not been done by our company in quite a few years.

Lucia di Lammermoor opens the season in a new production created just for us by the same team that brought us the marvelous *La bohème* in 2008: Director Tomer Zvulun and Set Designer Erhard Rom. It promises to be a very striking and dramatic re-interpretation of the old classic. *Lucia* demands a soprano of

continued inside ⇨

ANNUAL FUND



Our goal for Annual Fund donations is \$150,000, and, as of August 20, 2009, we have \$104,500 pledged. To make your pledge, contact Steve Borstein at 216.575.0903, ext 234 or visit www.operacleveland.org.



TWO KEYS TO SUCCESS

William Cole
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On the heels of two critically acclaimed productions, Opera Cleveland now looks forward to a beautifully conceived production of *Don Giovanni*. But what does it take to create such fantastic opera experiences? It's about having the right resources, and Opera Cleveland is fortunate to have both a small but mighty staff and a growing patron base of supporters.

With only ten full-time employees, we are able to produce stunning, well-received operas, as well as offer educational programming. This feat is a testament to the expertise, diligence and dedication of these individuals.

The day-to-day business of writing grants, meeting with donors, contracting singers, creating ad campaigns, budgeting, blogging and much more all culminates in a superb experience for you, our audience.

Through Opera Cleveland's everyday efforts—along with a healthy dose of creativity and resourcefulness, we have brought in new patrons to the opera. We're so excited to be introducing a younger generation to opera; indeed, we have recently formed a group targeted for those ages 25-50 called GO!, Generation Opera. The group will foster connections and networks and allow members to explore opera.

As we grow our patron base, it becomes even more crucial to grow our support base. We are now focused on bolstering our long-term viability with a planned giving program, which includes a potential new endowment at The Cleveland Foundation, and this is how you can help ensure Opera Cleveland will continue to flourish. By contributing to The Opera Cleveland Fund for Artistic Excellence, you leave a legacy—in honor of a special person, in memoriam or in celebration.

This endowment fund will ensure Opera Cleveland has just the right resources, so we can continue to provide Northeast Ohio with the opera we all enjoy. For more information about planned giving and The Opera Cleveland Fund for Artistic Excellence, contact Steve Borstein at 216.575.0903, ext. 234.

DON GIOVANNI

continued from page one

and Donna Anna? What is Elvira's obsession and fatal attraction to Don Giovanni?) With the lack of traditional visuals and the addition of more abstract interpretive ideas, it's easier for all the suppressed motivations of each character to escape and slip effortlessly to the surface—no matter how much the characters try to keep them hidden.

The fun road to hell

In conceiving this production, I felt that *Don Giovanni* is often staged in an exceptionally dark and grimly serious manner at the expense of Mozart's music. Sure, the show is ultimately about an unrepentant rake that is dragged down to hell for his sins, but getting there is where the fun lies. The witty libretto (written by the brilliant Lorenzo da Ponte, who also penned *Così fan tutte* and *Le nozze di Figaro* for Mozart) teems with jokes, puns, and darkly comic situations. We've worked to find a balance between the darkness and the light, the comedy and the drama, so the exceptional score of Mozart shines through in all of its brilliance.

Yes, Don Giovanni is a bad guy and will always be a bad guy. He is the only character in the opera that has no character arc as the show progresses. He never changes. He ends the show exactly as he starts it. No lessons are learned. He even remains defiant and unrepentant as he is taken down to his doom for his sins. Definitely not a nice guy. However, this production views the character of Don Giovanni not so much as one specific man out of history, but more as an archetypal figure who revels in flaunting his unchecked desire in the face of an orderly society. And whether we like it or not, it seems the spirit of *Don Giovanni* will always be with us, in one incarnation or another.



Photo courtesy: Bead Hummell for Nashville Opera

In Opera Cleveland's production of *Don Giovanni*, directed by John Hoomes, the sets and lighting are intentionally unrealistic, which helps reveal the underlying psychology of the opera.

JONATHAN BOYD



[DON OTTAVIO]

DREAM ROLE: Currently, *Faust*

ALL-TIME FAVORITE SINGER: Fritz Wunderlich

FAVORITE MOVIE: *L'auberge espagnol*

FIRST PIECE I EVER SANG:
“The Hallelujah Chorus” from *Handel's Messiah*

THREE THINGS I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT:
Cooking, love, vacations involving water activities

I KNEW I WANTED TO BE AN OPERA SINGER WHEN:

As a high school student, I had the rare opportunity of singing with Seiji Ozawa, Leonard Bernstein, Michael Tilson Thomas, Yo Yo Ma, Bobby McFerrin, Barbara Hendricks and Phyllis Curtin all in the same summer while a member of the Tanglewood Music Festival.

IF I HADN'T BECOME A SINGER, I WOULD HAVE:

Had a bicycle shop or done charter sailing

FAVORITE PART ABOUT ROLE IN DON GIOVANNI:

Overcoming the stereotype of Don Ottavio, emphasizing his strengths in love, honor and loyalty. I have found that Mozart's strongest characters are those who understand the true meaning of these three traits.

WHILE I'M IN CLEVELAND, I PLAN TO SEE:

My childhood friend of over 30 years.

FAVORITE BOOK:

The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho

ALYSON CAMBRIDGE



[DONNA ELVIRA]

MOST DIFFICULT PIECE I SING: “Sempre libera”

I CAN'T GO ON STAGE WITHOUT:

The earrings my parents gave me for my Met debut five years ago. (If they can't be actually in my ears, I pin them inside my costume.)

LATEST CD I PURCHASED: *Acoustica*: Alarm Will Sound performs Aphex Twin (electronica meets orchestral—very cool stuff!)

WHILE I'M IN CLEVELAND, I PLAN TO GO TO: Oberlin to visit my old stomping grounds, and, of course, the incredible Art Museum

I KNEW I WANTED TO BE AN OPERA SINGER WHEN:

I went to Tanglewood at age 16. I realized there were other teenagers who did what I did and that it wasn't a totally “uncool” hobby but rather something to embrace. I thought, “yeah, maybe I could do this for real!”

IF I HADN'T BECOME A SINGER, I WOULD HAVE:

Become a lawyer. I was a double degree sociology major and voice major at Oberlin and strongly considered trying to go to both law school AND grad school for singing at the same time. Ultimately, Curtis Institute of Music won out!

FAVORITE COMPOSER: So tough, but I really love singing Puccini.

WEB SITES I ALWAYS VISIT: Am I allowed to admit Facebook?!

THE SEASON AHEAD continued from page one

uncommon ability, and I'm excited to bring the young Israeli sensation Nili Riemer here for the role. Her unique voice will thrill you not only with breathtaking pyrotechnics but also rapturous musical phrasing.

Next up is the dazzling Opera Philadelphia production of *The Pearl Fishers*. Director Kay Castaldo and Lighting Designer Barry Steele match the lushness of the score with the visual magic they create on stage. David Shimotakahara and his Groundworks Dance company add to the Grand Opera style of the piece with riveting dancing.

The great verismo opera *I Pagliacci* stunned audiences when it first premiered. Violent, intense, mad and passionate, the emotions fly fast and furious, with one of opera's most famous tenor arias. Renowned Director Bernard Uzan brings us a 1950s, Fellini-esque interpretation, shocking and beautiful at the same time.

I've decided not to pair *Pagliacci* with any of its usual one-act opera partners, but rather with Poulenc's masterpiece *La voix humaine*. In this monodrama with just one soprano, we watch as a woman is abandoned by her lover on the phone. Poulenc's orchestration underscores her despairing emotions, and in this double bill we get the ultimate pairing of exquisite French sophistication and wild Italian passion.

We wind up our 2010 season with a gift to you: a rare presentation of Massenet's opera *Werther*. With some of the romantic period's most beautiful music, influenced by Wagner and featuring our wonderful Opera Cleveland orchestra, the masterpiece will captivate and move you. It's the story of a woman torn between her attraction for the wild poet Werther and the doting yet staid Albert. Does she do the right thing or go with the bad boy? John Hoomes, the director of this season's *Don Giovanni*, returns to work his magic with this opera in what promises to be a vivid and powerful evening.

Get SmART



Students perform at Opera Cleveland's SmART in the City program, funded by The Cleveland Foundation. Fifth and sixth graders from Cleveland Municipal School District enjoyed the arts day camp this summer.

Out of the Pit

BY DEAN WILLIAMSON • ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

For me, one of the great pleasures of Opera Cleveland is our wonderful orchestra. Northeast Ohio has some of the most skilled and talented classical musicians in the country, due in part to the proximity of the Cleveland Orchestra, CIM, BW and Oberlin. Our opera orchestra members are an important component of the freelance musicians in the area, and I like to think we have the best of the best.

To get into the opera orchestra's tenured core group, a player has to pass a rigorous, anonymous audition (behind a screen) in front of a panel of his/her peers. This is important because the players themselves understand what makes a good orchestra musician and want to find the right person who shares the same musical values and will blend seamlessly into the organization.

We do not have the luxury of time in putting together our operas, so we need players who can adapt quickly to the needs

of the orchestra pit. As a violist friend of mine once put it: “You are making a split-second decision with each note out of your instrument—do I follow the conductor, my stand partner, my section leader, the concert mistress, or the singer on the stage?” It can be sensory overload for the players, and many times it is very difficult to hear each other and the voices on stage because of the nature of pit acoustics.

Our players, who have dealt with the State Theatre pit and its quirks for many years now, have been patient with me as I try to improve the sonic experience for both them and the audience. Because the State was originally built as a vaudeville theater, the pit and auditorium definitely have aural personalities of their own. The curved proscenium surrounding the stage was meant to be a natural megaphone, and sometimes it sends the wrong voices or instruments into the theater.

In trying to equalize the sound, I've asked the orchestra to play on a 41” riser in the pit to bring them out into the open area. This clarifies the tone and enables them to hear each other better. It's similar to what the great European opera houses have, and it allows us to play with a greater dynamic range—from extremely soft to very loud.

I've also used the old Italian opera pit layout: all the winds and brass are to the right of the conductor and the strings center to the left. This is different than the symphonic layout you'd see in a concert hall. What it does is create massed choirs, so each group can play with better intonation and ensemble.

The orchestra is the soul of an opera company, the emotional soundtrack to what is happening on stage. I couldn't be prouder of our fine players who have so beautifully risen to the difficult challenges of the repertoire this season and played with such style and elegance. I look forward to the years ahead and growing with them as we make music together.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Dr. Pauline F. Ramig

VICE PRESIDENT

Via R. Beechler

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Gary V. Bombej

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Bonnie M. Baker
Margaret Anne Cannon
Thomas Demitrack
Barbara Leirvik
Marilyn C. MacLeod
Nicholas Peay
Bradford Roller
Peter L. Rubin
Gary Small

TRUSTEES

Bruce H. Akers
Thomas S. Allen
Valarie McCall
William P. Blair, III
Dr. Glenn R. Brown
Michael C. DeAloia
Richard Dempsey
Nikki DiFilippo
Ritu Furlan

ADVISORY BOARD

Richard M. Knoth
Robert P. Madison
Dr. Steven A. Mahoney
Gerald Chattman
John G. McDonald
Antoinette S. Miller
Melodie Morgan-Minott, M.D.
Sue Peay
David L. Simon

ADVISORY BOARD

Bruce H. Akers
Dr. Nathan Berger
Gerald Chattman
Rand M. Curtiss
Ronald K. Leirvik
Alex Machaskee
Steven A. Minter
Richard W. Pogue

ADVISORY BOARD

Charles A. Ratner
Robert S. Reitman
Barbara S. Robinson
Dr. Joanne Rand Schwartz
Edwin Z. Singer