

BEL CANTO

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

December 2024

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>

Member Meeting December 11

*Picnic in the Opera House Courtyard
featuring singer from Sarasota Opera

*Meet and socialize at 10:00, meeting at 10:30,
performance at 11, lunch at 11:30

Turkey Sandwich or

Pressed Vegetarian Sandwich

Orders complemented with fruit, chips and a cookie

The price is \$15.50

or bring your own lunch

Send your order to: Cathy Knobel, 787 Benjamin Franklin
Drive, Sarasota, FL 34236, Cell: 941-666-3253, email:
knobelwd@aol.com by December

The Opera will supply regular and decaf. coffee, tea, water
and soft drinks



Our Holiday Party is coming up soon!

**Please make reservations to join us at 4 p.m. on Sunday, December 8 at the home of
Maryanne Hazen, 3637 Wilderness Boulevard West
Parrish, FL 34219**

**This sparkling holiday event, co-hosted by Syble DiGirolamo, is open to MOG members
only, and is an opportunity to get to know each other better in a festive environment.
Our own member, former opera singer Valerie Giuliani will entertain.**

**Please reserve your place by calling Maryanne at 941-744-7074 or email
mhazen@tampabay.rr.com**

Cost is \$30. per person + bring a dish to share (appetizer, hors d'oeuvres, desserts...)

CARD-PLAYING MUSIC FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Elizabeth Aversa

As we gather with friends and family for the holidays, we often enjoy card games, friendly gaming wagers, and other amusements while we await the holiday feast. Endless hands of Pinochle were played at my in-laws' kitchen table as the primo piatto was prepared and everyone enjoyed the warmth of the oven, the aroma of lasagna, and the company of family.

The history of card games is a long one, but most, according to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "exploit the fact that each player can identify only the cards he holds, not those of his opponents." Although card games originated in China, by the 1370s (even before the first opera was sung!) card games had arrived in Italy and Spain. Because cards predated the printing press, cards were hand painted, expensive, and associated with the wealthy. The card game depicted in *La Traviata* fits that tradition, but in *Carmen* it's the gypsies who read the Tarot cards.

A little research revealed that there are many card games in Italian-, Russian-, and English-language operas. Tomsy's aria "Three Cards" from *The Queen of Spades* was heard at our November meeting at Palm Aire, but there are many more operas featuring cards and wagering. While you visit family and friends this season, regardless of whether you indulge in games, enjoy these selections from the opera repertoire.

In the first four operas listed here, gaming is crucial to each story. In the remaining works, the card games are incidental to the operas' themes. Please click on the links and enjoy the music.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* – In Act I, Scene 1, Tomsy reveals something about the Queen's gambling past and her mysterious, secret winning combination of three cards. Here is a link to "Three Cards." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zioc4HrK49c>

Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* – The story is simple: Sheriff Rance desires saloon keeper Minnie, but she is in love with bandit Ramerrez (aka Dick Johnson). Minnie agrees to a game of poker with the sheriff, with freedom for Ramerrez and herself if she wins. Here is the card scene. Watch closely to see Minnie's sleight of hand that enables her to win the game. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyh68QyM0kg>

Samuel Barber's *A Hand of Bridge* – This is a short opera (about 10 minutes long) that explores what the two couples playing bridge really have on their minds. Here is a link to the whole opera. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SOQp2dRkZE>

The Gambler by Sergei Prokofiev is about the difficulties of gambling to pay off one's debt. The opera is based on Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel of the same title. Here is a link to the Soviet era movie version of this opera. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gkNSxWOjLA

In Act III of Georges Bizet's *Carmen* the title character and two friends tell one another's fortunes with a deck of cards. In a foreshadowing of Act IV, Carmen is dealt the Death Card and reflects on her ill-fated fortune. Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxHGrTbtly0>

Douglas Moore's *Ballad of Baby Doe* has a gambling scene that was added in a revision of the opera. In Act II Scene 2 a political discussion takes place around a game of poker. Here is the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-KDMquqrnc>

Finally, there is a gaming table scene in Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*. In Act II Violetta's lover Alfredo plays against the baron who is with her now. Alfredo wins and throws the winnings at Violetta's feet. Here is "Ogni suo aver tal femmina" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zRi85zna-0>

In conclusion, here's to happy, safe, and healthy holiday season. And best of luck at whichever table you choose to take your seat! We'll see you in 2025!

MANATEE OPERA GUILD 2024-2025 SCHEDULE

Board Meetings: Second Wednesday at 10 a.m., location tba

December 4 (First Wednesday)

January 15

February 12

March 12

April 9

General Membership Meetings: Coffee and conversation at 10 a.m.; meeting 10:30 a.m., Singers/speakers at 11 a.m., luncheon at 11:30 a.m.

December: 11 (Wed) —Courtyard picnic at Opera House

January 16 (Thurs)

February 19: (Wed) Sweetheart Luncheon

March 14: (Fri) Spring Fling — HJD Award and Deane Allyn Award

April 16: (Wed) New Member Recognition

Preludes: Coffee and conversation at 9:30, speaker at 10 to 11:30 Westminster Manor Auditorium.

December 13 ** (not 3rd Friday): *Barber of Seville*

January 17: *Marriage of Figaro*

February 21: *Stiffelio*

Special Events:

Holiday Party, Sunday, December 8, 4 p.m. - 8 p.m. At the home of Maryanne Hazen. Co-hosted by Syble Di Girolamo.

Festive Holiday Party featuring plentiful hors d'oeuvres, wine and desserts.

This year's entertainer will be our own Valerie Giuliani, soprano. Valerie has sung professionally with several opera companies, and now is a member of the Choral Artists of Sarasota.

Contemporary Opera Film Showing Thursday, January 2, 2025 Westminster Manor Auditorium, Bradenton.

Enjoy a showing of a *The Ghosts of Versailles*, composed by John Corigliano, commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, having its debut there in 1991. You will recognize some of the characters in this modern opera -- Figaro, Susanna, Count Almaviva, Cherubino -- who have roles in both *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Barber of Seville* during the 2025 Winter Season at the Sarasota Opera. In this opera, the ghosts of the Versailles court of Louis XVI, especially Marie Antoinette, are being consoled and entertained by Pierre Beaumarchais, the author of both the Figaro plays that were turned into the operas mentioned above.

A MESSAGE FROM JEANNE

I am happy to report that we are right on target for gifts to Sarasota Opera, with gifts totaling \$16,000 so far, and it isn't even January! Thank you so much to our generous donors and sponsors, our attendees and our organizers and doers who make such gifts possible.

Maryanne Hazen and Syble DiGirolamo have joined forces again to host the most exciting, delicious and fun holiday party you are likely to attend this season. Plenty of food of all kinds, entertainment and good friends ensure a lovely evening, and I hope to see you all there.

And, this is the month when we take a break from the country club to enjoy a picnic at the Sarasota Opera House. Who doesn't love a picnic? Hopefully the weather this year will be a little more cooperative! It's great fun to see the amazement on the faces of passers-by when they hear the music, especially when we invite them into the courtyard. We haven't nabbed any new members, but we sure do present the friendly face of opera and our Guild.

A few weeks ago, I had a call from our Education Chair, Elizabeth Aversa, while she was touring our new Prelude venue. She was excited about the new venue, but in a panic as to letting our members know of the change and all its implications, like directions and parking. I hope we did a good job with email messages and announcements at our meeting. We had a good crowd, and most were enthusiastic about the comfortable chairs, large room, great audio-visual system and easy parking. Of course, Martha Collins did a remarkable job of explaining Cav/Pag, and she too was jubilant at not having to fight the microphones, projectors, computer hook-ups, etc.

Our membership has reached last year's level, with just a few stragglers still owing dues. **We are happy to welcome three new members:**

Neumann, Sue
8006 Warwick Gardens Lane
University Park, FL 34201
208-863-3831
Sueneumann_1@msn.com

and

Buzzard, James and Eileen
7322 Greystone Street
Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202-7929
716-984-8562
eibuzzard@gmail.com

SARASOTA OPERA EVENTS OPERAS

Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci

February 15, 7:30PM*, February 20, 7:30PM,
February 23, 1:30PM, February 26, 7:30PM,
March 1, 1:30PM, March 7, 7:30PM, March 11, 7:30PM,
March 19, 1:30PM, March 22, 7:30PM, March 29, 1:30PM

Two operas, two betrayed husbands, two tragic ends. In *Cavalleria rusticana* the calm of a Sicilian Easter morning is broken by a betrayed lover who sets off a chain of events ending in violent tragedy. In true theatrical tradition *Pagliacci's* clown tries to go on the show, but his real -life humiliation and despair lead to a grim climax. The violent passions and raw emotions of these two works changed the direction of Italian opera forever.

Barbiere di Siviglia

February 22, 7:30PM*, February 25, 7:30PM,
February 27, 7:30PM, March 2, 1:30PM, March 5, 7:30PM
March 9, 1:30PM, March 14, 7:30PM, March 21, 7:30PM
March 27, 1:30PM, March 29, 7:30PM

Determined to win the heart of the beautiful Rosina, Count Almaviva enlists the help of Figaro, the barber of Seville, to steal her away from her guardian, Dr. Bartolo. Hilarious complications ensue to some of opera's most delightful music. *The Barber of Seville* is one of the most beloved comedic works in the operatic repertory

Marriage of Figaro

March 8, 7:00PM*, March 13, 7:00PM, March 16,
1:30PM, March 19, 7:00PM, March 22, 1:30PM,
March 25, 7:00PM, March 28, 7:00PM

Continuing the story of *The Barber of Seville*, Count Almaviva's eye has now wandered and his current objective is Susanna, Figaro's fiancée. The distressed couple, along with Rosina (now the Countess Almaviva) conspire to reveal the count's lechery, despite the many obstacles thrown in their way. Mozart's musical genius, along with Lorenzo DaPonte's witty libretto make *The Marriage of Figaro* one of opera's masterpiece.

Stiffelio

March 15, 7:30PM*, March 18, 7:30PM
March 20, 7:30PM, March 23, 1:30PM
March 26, 7:30PM, March 30, 1:30PM

A Protestant minister returns from a mission abroad to be confronted by his wife's infidelity. *Stiffelio* faces his wife's transgression, battling his all-too-human emotions with his religious faith. Written just before *Rigoletto*, this long-neglected, emotionally charged work is now recognized as an important work by Verdi.

*Opening Night performances are preceded by an optional dinner.

Special Events



Sarasota Opera Gala: A Night in Seville Honoring Les and Carol Brualdi

Friday, January 31, 2025
Reception at 6 PM
The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota

Moonlight & Melodies: Mozart's Viennese Feast

A festive event transporting guests to Mozart's Vienna.
Tuesday, February 18, 2025, 6:30 PM
Sarasota Opera House Courtyard
\$225 Per Person | Limited Seating

Salute to the Stars

Be surrounded by the celebration and sounds of Sarasota Opera's most outstanding Apprentice and Studio Artists being honored. Enjoy a gourmet lunch with performances by the awardees. Awards are presented through the generosity of visionary individuals as well as the Sarasota and Manatee Opera Guilds.

Tuesday, March 25, 2025, 11:30 AM
Sarasota Yacht Club
Per Person Levels \$85 and \$150