

THE SACRED IN OPERA INITIATIVE

Summer 2017 Newsletter



NOA
NATIONAL OPERA ASSOCIATION

The Sacred in Opera Initiative Newsletter

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JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS are welcome year round and should be sent electronically to the Editor-in- Chief, Isai Jess Muñoz (IJMunoz@udel.edu). Full submission guidelines may be found online (www.noa.org).

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From the Chair of SIO

Dr. Isai Jess Muñoz



Making Some Noise in the Valley of Dry Bones...

... the bones covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground and were completely dried out. ... Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as complete skeletons. Then as I watched, muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies, but they still had no breath in them.... Then he said ... “Come, O breath, from the four winds” ... They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army.

- **Torah. Yechezkel- Ezekiel 37**

I greet you encouraged to see and to hear that so many institutions and professional organizations are delineating messages of compassion and hope through this miraculous form of communication we call opera. My welcoming title is inspired by visceral images first found in what scholars believe to be the writings of the Hebrew Ezekiel, who in Jewish, Christian, Islam, and Bahá'í faith is best known as a prophet. It is well accepted that beyond a poetic message responding to a specific period of great crisis of physical suffering and communal identity in Israel's history, Ezekiel's vivid narrative of dry bones coming back to life can be read anew in a way that represents those places of separation, brokenness, and even seeming death in ourselves and in our communities that we grieve and yearn to one day see brought back to life. The Noise of the bones of each body coming together is yet another powerful use of metaphor imbedded in Ezekiel's message that can serve to describe a celebrant's exultation upon seeing that which has been lost, recovered. In line with the mission of the Sacred in Opera Initiative that welcomes all faith traditions and testaments of spiritual journeys, this year's Summer Newsletter highlights compositions and production processes that are making some noise in today's valleys of dry bones.

Our first feature looks at Fifty Third Street, a relatively new and powerful opera by composer Jody Nagel that addresses homelessness in urban areas. Stage Director for the opera's world premier, Tammie Huntington, walks us through the score and libretto, and expresses how the show's original creative team representing Atheists, Evangelical Christians, and people from a variety of faiths, engaged in formative interfaith dialogue that called them to learn how to value and respect “the other” while maintaining (and often strengthening) their own spiritual identity. Tammy candidly shares how her interaction with this new work prompted her and her husband's decision to adopt their little girl through the foster care system.

We also take time to highlight productions in the 2016-2017 season from NOA members around the country that focused on sacred subjects. We applaud The University of Colorado at Boulder that recently workshopped Mark Adamo's controversial score, The Gospel of Mary Magdalene. That Mary Magdala was a repentant prostitute is almost certainly untrue. Adamo's female-centric narrative offers us a work of art inspired by scholarly research of the Canonical and Gnostic Gospels and other early writings of the church, depicting Mary as a powerful woman at Jesus' side.

David Gockley, General Director of the San Francisco Opera, who commissioned the opera, has expressed that Adamo's interpretation should not be seen as "a work of history...or a work of spiritual truth." Adamo has expressed in other interviews that his process when writing the opera served more as a means to reconcile his own sexuality with his faith, and produced what he considers to be a "factual fantasia."

In other news, we are pleased to report that earlier this year, The Grace Farms Foundation awarded The University of Delaware Opera Workshop Ensemble a Not-For Profit Space Grant for engaging in projects specific to fulfilling the mission of the Sacred in Opera Initiative of the NOA. Their project invited a broad segment of people into engagement with texts inspired by the Passion myth that served to explore what happens when goodness is challenged and assaulted. In light of all the prejudice, violence, and misunderstanding still facing the world today, The Sacred in Opera Initiative takes time to make noise and to celebrate all those in our field who are taking courageous steps forward to foster hope and reconciliation through their artistry.

Looking to the future, we hope you are planning to register for the 2018 NOA Convention in New Orleans (January 3-7, 2018). This year's Sacred in Opera Plenary Session, alongside all other convention events focused on this year's theme, Opera's Tradition and Rebirth, will feature outstanding artists and teachers with topics and perspectives aimed to strengthen your work in our field.

Lastly, please take a moment to read through notes on our Editorial Board. The SIO Committee has refined our language on peer reviewed article submissions. We are always interested in hearing from potential contributors, and we have drawn up a few points on why and how our web-based format might just be one of the best high-impact publications to showcase your ideas and projects related to opera in interplay with the

ideologies of world religions.

As always, we hope that this newsletter serves to inspire and renew your faith in all that good ol' opera can do in today's world.

Dr. Isai Jess Muñoz

The Sacred in Opera Initiative of the NOA
Chair and Senior Editor

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Fifty-Third Street: A New Opera Addressing the Marginalization of the Homeless in America

Dr. Tammie Huntington



Opera can be a powerful medium, introducing the audience to incredible stories and characters that can reach deep into souls and change lives. Music is a meeting place that goes beyond the spoken word. The sacred in opera may, at times, be found in the most unsuspecting places, and may lead us into enriching experiences we would not have previously conceived. Jody Nagel, composer, is a self-professed Atheist who uses several Biblical references in his opera, *Fifty-Third Street*. Tammie Huntington, the author, is an evangelical Christian who was drawn to the music and message of the opera and chose to produce and direct the premiere as her dissertation project for the Doctor of Arts degree at Ball State University. Both agree that truth is truth. Through the production process, the composer and director found a common passion that superseded their philosophical differences and forged a friendship that continues to enrich each of their lives, both personally and professionally.

What is *Fifty-Third Street*?

In 1992, Jody Nagel wrote a 90-minute one-act opera entitled *Fifty-Third Street* as his dissertation project for the University of Texas at Austin. The librettist is Seth Wolitz, then a University of Texas faculty member. The opera examines the lives of two homeless men on 53rd Street in New York City, and the reactions toward them from various facets of society, including the church, art institutions, businesses and tourists. Nagel completed the vocal/piano score in 1996 and the orchestration in 1997. The score, primarily the orchestration, underwent some revisions for its world premiere in 2006-2007 which took place on the campus of Ball State University on April 12 and 15, 2007. The work provided an opportunity for the community of research and voice students at BSU to interact with a living composer and to premiere an all-original American opera.

Fifty-Third Street utilizes 13 vocalists, two non-singing roles, three street musicians (non-singing actors who

must perform or mime their instruments onstage) and an optional chorus. Nagel now offers two orchestral versions-- it is orchestrated for either a medium-size traditional western orchestra or for a smaller chamber orchestra and keyboard (the latter served as the orchestral arrangement utilized for the opera's premiere). The opera is through-composed, but demarcated by 18 scenes, each of which indicates the entrance of a new character or set of characters.

Set & Synopsis of Opera

The set of *Fifty-Third Street* should depict a clear view of 53rd Street, Manhattan, between 5th and 6th Avenues on a late Saturday afternoon in the autumn. The original stage design was made up of photographic images of the actual 53rd Street projected onto scrims, circa the years 1980-2008. From the audience view, the stage was seen as if looking down the street. On the right was the façade of St. Thomas Cathedral, with the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) beyond. On the left was the Tishman building with its subway entrance

sign in clear view. Beyond this was the Donnell Public Library, and then the American Crafts Museum. Down the street in the distance could be seen the NBC Building. All scenes took place on the street – the “street” being the microcosm of the modern New York condition. While the projected images of NYC were of real places, it is important to note that the people and the events described within the opera are fictional and are not intended to represent any particular organization, but rather various facets of our society in general. The music is continuously active and tries to depict the hustle and bustle of urban life. In the opening chorus, we are met with a barrage of New Yorkers from every walk of life as they sing the praises of their great city.

The opening tutti is followed by a series of character sketches. All are unrelated, except that many of the characters have in common a shared revulsion toward the homeless persons present. The only named character in the opera is “Benny,” a homeless man who was recently forcibly released from a mental institution. His name has been symbolically taken from the Biblical, “Tribe of Benjamin,” the tribe rejected by all others (as read in the book of Judges, chapter 20).

A policeman is the first character we meet, as he walks his regular route. He is of Irish-American extraction, he is honest, and of another generation. He bemoans the decay he sees happening on the streets of NYC. In his wanderings, he meets a Food Vendor, and together they reminisce of “the good ol’ days.”

The Policeman then spots a Senegalese Street Vendor and challenges him on the legality of setting up shop on the street. The Policeman also demonstrates disdain for the street musicians playing nearby. A trio is formed as the vendors reminisce of their homelands and the Policeman continues to lament the changes on 53rd Street.

As a male choir is heard rehearsing in the church, Bum 1 appears and rummages in the trash for his supper. The Food Vendor and Policeman discuss their opinion of the homeless, and we get some insight into the character of Bum 1 as he interacts with other men

passing him by on the street. Bum 1 is described in the score as “a raté, a restless cosmopolitan, a lost talent, possibly a victim himself, wearing a tattered letter jacket from Berkeley.”

As the street clears, the Museum Director and his Secretary appear to discuss their plans to improve business. Bum 1 returns near the end of their dreaming and they react with condescension. As they quickly retreat back into the museum, Benny makes his first entrance, pleased that he has just received a large turkey bone as a gift. Bum I tries to talk Benny into sharing with him, when a Reporter from a local television station appears, searching for a good story on the homeless of NYC. After listening to the reporter pitch her idea, Bum I drunkenly regales Benny with the glories of street living. Benny does not understand all that Bum I is saying, but gives us some insight into his own background as he gently and sweetly sings of his own memories.

The Senegalese Street Vendor returns and attempts to interest the Street Musicians in his wares, but with no success. He is pleased to see Benny, and attempts to warn him of the Policeman’s former inquiry. Benny, Bum I, and the Senegalese Street Vendor launch into a trio discussing their place on the streets of New York.

Suddenly, the museum lets out and the street is filled again. Two French tourists, a mother and daughter, enjoy the sights and sounds of New York City, but are rather horrified and disgusted by the food vendors and the homeless on the streets. Bum I reacts violently to the haughtiness displayed by the French Mother and a quintet follows as the small crowd on the stage react to each other’s presence on 53rd Street.

Amidst all the commotion, A Reverend appears, wanting to clear the street for a wedding that is about to begin. All react to the demands of the Reverend, and the Policeman enters again to try to disperse the mounting riot. The crowd continues to attract more and more of the street’s regulars and all scream for their own rights to be on 53rd Street. The fighting is momentarily interrupted as the Bride is spotted. As the wedding begins, the Police Officer finally convinces the crowd to disperse.

After the street clears, Bum I and Benny sneak back to their warm place above the grates of the subway, in front of the church. Benny listens to the end of the wedding, and wonders aloud if he will ever one day be married. This leads Bum I to reflect upon his own life and his ensuing philosophy. His emotions begin to boil and he again beseeches Benny to share his turkey bone, promising to take only one bite. Benny tentatively agrees and becomes distraught when Bum I refuses to give it back. For the first time, Benny stands up to Bum I, leading to the climax of the opera where Bum I violently stabs Benny with a stiletto, leaving him dead on the street.

The murder scene is followed by the return of several characters who display various attitudes and reactions to the sight of Benny body lying prone on a subway grating. Several are never even aware that he is dead, and the Policeman, in a moment of ironic kindness, decides not to disturb Benny and not to send him away.

Benny's lifeless body is eventually removed by three street musicians, redressed symbolically as the "Three Fates," during a balletic scene reminiscent of a "Noh" ceremony. For the original production, an image of "Christ Crucified over Manhattan" was projected high onto the set as Benny's body was removed.

The opera concludes in a tutti based on the opening crowd scene. The characters sing the ecstatic lines of "New York, New York," as they had earlier. Apathetic or unaware of Benny's death, they continue living out their various desperate or comfortable situations, mostly unchanged. The orchestra has soured, however, and is at odds with their singing. In the final moment of the opera, Bum I can be seen sneering from the subway entrance, now symbolic of the entranceway to "Hell." The music is cut off, uncadenced, with one final red strobe blast and a blackout. Nagel and Wolitz state the implication of the entire opera is that the failure of modern institutions (i.e. the church, business, art, education, etc.) leaves us all, in a sense, homeless.

Compositional Choices Employed

Fifty-Third Street addresses relevant social justice issues in a way that is both musically and dramatically compelling. The opera is through-composed, the continuously-moving music illustrating the hustle and bustle of city life. Recitative is not used in the traditional recitativo secco (dry recitative) or recitativo accompagnato (accompanied recitative) manner.



Arioso is the tool that Nagel employs for dialogue between the characters and to move seamlessly between the arias and ensemble pieces.

The music is pitch-centric, utilizing the western, equal-tempered tuning system, and a standard western, 19th-century orchestra with the addition of a synthesizer playing acoustic instrument-type sounds. The form, key centers and key relationships are based entirely upon the characters and the unfolding of the libretto with virtually no traditional musical forms. Each character has an assigned key center, chosen carefully to represent the relationship between them. Benny and Bum I are a tritone apart, illustrating the conflict between their characters that leads to the murder in Scene 12. The Reverend, who represents organized religion, is set in the two key centers of D & Ab. His tritone is maximally distant from the street people's tritone of B/F. The Reverend's own two tritone-related keys humorously represent the Medieval "Diabolus in Musica."

The remaining characters have key centers within semitones of either the homeless characters or the Reverend, representing a kind of class distinction. The socially lower class characters in Fifty-Third Street (Policeman, Street Cleaner, Senegalese Street Vendor, and Food Vendor) have key centers within a semitone of Bum 1 and Benny's B/F axis. The middle class characters (News Reporter, French Tourists, Businessman, MOMA Director and his Secretary) have key centers within a semitone of the Reverend's D/Ab axis.

Traditional major and minor modes are not employed. Nagel uses Heptatonia Secunda modes to which he has assigned names by hybridizing the names of the two white key modes which contain the same tritones as the given Heptatonia Secunda mode. The tritones within the modes are used to shape the melodic lines within the opera amid occasional octatonic or whole-tone extensions of the modal scales. The vocal melodies follow the contours of the natural spoken text with comprehensibility a major emphasis. The result is constantly shifting meter, irregular rhythmic patterns and rapid tempo changes throughout. The melody line is almost always doubled by an instrument in the orchestra.

Arias are employed to give us insight into each one of the characters. Each character performs within his or her key center and several of the characters have motives representative of their presence onstage. Programmatic dissonance and quotations from other well-known works are engaged occasionally to add humor and irony to the characters' text. It is important to note that all Ensembles onstage are deliberately used by Nagel to represent either a conflict of ideas between characters (polyphony), or to demonstrate the few times that characters are in agreement (homophony).

There are four places where Nagel uses an off-stage choir in traditional homophony. In each of these instances, the music is heard coming from the St. Thomas church, strategically and sometimes ironically placed within the context of the drama happening outside the edifice. The first of these situations is a madrigal setting of Psalm 8 by Salomone de Rossi,

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" This occurs just as we are introduced to Bum 1. The Psalm text floats from the church as Bum 1 questions whether or not God is attentive to the state of His creation. The second example is another madrigal setting by Solomone de Rossi, Psalm 128, translated "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost parts of thy house." This mixed chorus happens at the beginning of the Scene 12 murder scene during a wedding occurring inside the church. The music causes Benny to wonder about his own future possibilities for a wife and family.

The third semi-traditional chorus is a Dies Irae chant melody for tenor and bass heard in the background in Scene 13 as the Senegalese Street Vendor appears and finds Benny's lifeless body. The open fifths provide a surreal sensation. Time seems to stop for a moment as the SSV takes on a dream-like motion before stumbling across Benny's body.

The final example occurs during the Scene 17 interlude. The SATB chorus begins in unison to chant alternately in Hebrew and English, "Hear our voices. Renew our days, God, Our Lord, as of yore." This takes place as Benny's body is being ceremonially removed by the "Three Fates," or Street Musicians. The music intensifies and the chorus separates into octaves, pleading for understanding from the audience that we are all necessary to creation and fulfillment of the world and its restoration.

Implementing the Message of Fifty-Third Street

The messages of the opera are varied and many. They can be found hidden within one of Benny's simple lines or drifting throughout the background in an off-stage chorus. Nagel states that the primary challenge to audience members is to confront and judge the modern urban city condition and to leave the performance hall demanding that there be changes in their world.

Many of the premiere cast accepted an invitation to participate in a poverty simulation offered on

the campus of Ball State University by EPIC and TEAMwork for Quality Living. TEAMwork for Quality Living is an organization that was founded in 1995 in Delaware County, Indiana, for the purpose of empowering people in poverty toward self-sufficiency, and creating better communities. EPIC is one of the programs run by TEAMwork, and seeks to draw people out of the isolation of poverty and into the fellowship of community by creating safe places and events for people of all social circumstances to meet and develop friendships.

The poverty simulation gave each participant an identity and a set of circumstances: some were disabled, some were unemployed, some were single mothers, but all lived in poverty. The goal of the simulation was to introduce people to the idea of how poverty affects lives. The simulation lasts an hour, with each 15-minute segment representing a week in the life of the individuals, who must struggle to get food, take

more than 37 million people were living in poverty within the United States at the time of the opera's premiere in 2007. At that time, poverty rates were rising more rapidly in Indiana than in almost any other state. Approximately 88,000 people in the state of Indiana were homeless, and over 29,000 of those were children. Forty percent of children qualified for free or reduced lunches, and 2,255 people received food stamps every month. Current poverty facts may be obtained at <http://www.worldhunger.org/hunger-in-america-2016-united-states-hunger-poverty-facts/> and <http://www.stats.indiana.edu/topic/welfare.asp>.

Those who participated in the poverty simulation were deeply impacted by their experience. One of the cast members told of leaving an opera rehearsal and subsequently reaching out to a homeless man seeking shelter in the parking garage behind the performance hall. "How can I ever just walk by again?" the student stated. My experiences as director of this production's

premiere largely influenced my decision to adopt through the foster care system in the state of Indiana.

The students from the Virginia Ball Center for Creative Inquiry were also involved in a poverty study at the time of Fifty-Third Street's premier. They and the personnel from TEAMwork for Quality Living were instrumental in advertising for the opera's premiere. In exchange, both organizations were

granted reciprocal complimentary advertising in the program book and on-screen projections prior to the performances. The Virginia Ball Center also provided a display within the venue lobby and created a power-point presentation of poverty facts from Delaware County which played silently on the large screen above the stage following the final blackout. Ushers at the



care of their children, obtain a job, pay their bills, and keep a roof over their heads. The simulation included interactions with the police department, bankers, social services, mortgage collectors, utility companies and doctors.

The cast and crew of Fifty-Third Street learned that

door offered audience members an opportunity to complete a card requesting more information about EPIC and its programs as they exited the venue.

It is recommended that future performances also seek to collaborate with local organizations concerned with homelessness and social justice issues. This will help to increase the direct relevance of the performance, community involvement and the advancement of the genre to people who may not otherwise attend opera.

Many composers throughout the centuries have used opera as a way to comment on the world in which they lived and to challenge the status quo: Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*; Verdi, *Un ballo in maschera*; Berg, *Wozzek*; Britten, *Peter Grimes*. Jody Nagel has continued this tradition in a way that is relevant to one of today's most disheartening systemic issues, compelling us to consider how we can positively contribute to help those marginalized in our communities. Future directors will discover that *Fifty-Third Street* offers an invaluable tool for the musical development of students and professionals, for the growth of the American opera repertory and for impacting the American way of life.

For sound clips and photos of the premiere, please visit 53rdstreetopera.com

About our Contributor

Dr. Tammie Huntington has enjoyed a variety of opera/opera performances including the roles of Lucy in Menotti's *The Telephone*, Papagena in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Josephine in Gilbert & Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and Suor Genovieffa in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*. Huntington has also appeared as Guest Soprano Soloist in orchestral productions of Haydn's *Creation*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Bach's *Magnificat*, Bach's *Cantata No. 51*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Schubert's *Mass in G Major, No. 2*. Huntington has a Bachelor's degree in Music Education and Applied Voice from Grace College, and a Master of Music degree in Voice Performance from Ball State University. She also received her Doctor of Arts degree, with performance emphases in voice, opera, and opera direction from

Ball State University, where she produced and directed the world premiere of *Fifty-Third Street*, a new American opera by composer Jody Nagel. Huntington is a Professor of Music at Indiana Wesleyan University, where she teaches Applied Voice, Diction for Singers, and co-directs *Opera Workshop* and *Opera Theatre*.

Colorado University Boulder Retools Mark Adamo's 'Gospel of Mary Magdalene'

Kelly Dean Hansen

When a musical work is premiered, that doesn't mean its evolution is halted or that the version heard and seen by the audience will automatically be the definitive one, frozen forever in the published score. Some classical composers, like Gustav Mahler, were notorious for revising their scores after public performances. Sometimes, the realization on stage or in the concert hall does not always match the vision the creator had in mind. Such is the case with "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene," the third opera by Mark Adamo.



CU Boulder Eklund Opera Program's NOW series presented "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene" in two performances on June 16 and 18, 2017.

The composer is most known and celebrated for his first operatic masterpiece, "Little Women," which was staged by the University of Colorado's opera program in 2013.

It was also in 2013 when "Mary Magdalene" received its high-profile world premiere at the San Francisco Opera, conducted by Michael Christie (who was then in his last year as music director of Boulder's Colorado Music Festival). As Adamo expected, the critical response was mixed, and despite the sterling performances of his cast and creative team, he says that he knew he wanted to revisit the score.

The CU Eklund Opera Program's summer new opera workshop, known as CU NOW, offered Adamo an ideal

chance to re-imagine the opera. Normally, CU NOW workshops pieces that have been commissioned or are in progress, well before their professional premieres. The works are often unfinished and typically presented partially.

Thus, the presentation of a complete opera — one that has already had a high-profile world premiere — in a new version was exciting new ground for the highly regarded summer program. The workshop version of "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene" was presented in two performances at the Imig Music Theater June 16 and 18. The production was free and open to the public. Adamo himself served as stage director.

Adamo said that the major changes to the piece are not in the libretto — which he wrote based on extensive

research involving the canonical New Testament gospels, as well as the gnostic gospels and other sources. Rather, the size of the ensemble and the nature of the staging are the focus.

The libretto — which re-imagines the New Testament story through the eyes of its principal female characters — retains its controversial aspects. Adamo had no interest in diminishing those, although “part of me was always apprehensive about taking one of the foundational myths of western culture and turning it upside down,” Adamo said. Everything in the libretto, including its most explosive aspects, is rooted in his study of the sources. This includes the exploration of the romantic life and sexuality of Jesus and Mary Magdalene (Jesus is called “Yeshua” in the libretto), alternative explanations for the origin of the virgin birth narrative, and even the idea that Mary the mother of Jesus (called “Miriam” in the score) might have considered an abortion. But Adamo said the female-centric narrative actually proved just as controversial.

Adamo said that when he and program director Leigh Holman arranged for the workshop, Holman assured him of the Boulder community’s open-mindedness.

The San Francisco production included a large chorus wearing modern dress (and representing modern-day “seekers”) along with the biblical characters in traditional dress.

“The chorus was a character, and I was asking for too much acting from such a large group,” Adamo said. “And the biblical costume plot became so central that it rendered the characters in the chorus more peripheral than I wanted them to be.”

He said that the point was always less about what the biblical characters were doing than how they were perceived.

He has reduced the full cast from 73 to 16, and the large chorus is pared down to 12. Adamo said the original conception for the massive San Francisco stage would mean that only the largest companies would ever be able to present it. “I can already see that the reduced ensemble will be much nimbler and make so many things more dramatically possible.”

As for the actual musical substance of the score, not much has changed, but the pace is different.

“It really was much slower and sluggish than it needed to be,” Adamo said. “The story does have elements of comedy and lightness.”

The workshop performance was presented with accompaniment from two keyboards, percussion and harp. Adamo said he will likely revisit his original orchestration based on the experience at CU, but one thing he is known for is making a relatively small instrumental ensemble seem larger than it is.

Joining Adamo in the creative team were guest conductor Andrew Bisantz, music director Jeremy Reger, and assistant director Michael Aniolek. Adamo had high praise for CU’s team, noting that they put together the 90-minute first act in two days. The cast included distinguished CU Opera alumni Sarah Barber, mezzo-soprano and Wei Wu, bass.

The opera is personal for Adamo and reflects his own journey and spiritual history, with the central question being the role of sexuality in a life that is meant to be virtuous.

“My mother was divorced, which meant she could not take communion in the Catholic Church,” he said. Later, Adamo realized he was gay. “The story is an attempt to reconstruct the New Testament and imbue it with the story of my own life.”

The Grace Farms Foundation Welcomes The Sacred in Opera Initiative



The Arts Initiative at the Grace Farms Foundation and the Sacred in Opera Initiative came together this past April to present contemporary interpretations of mystical Baroque vocal masterpieces by Neapolitan composer, Francesco Provenzale.

The cast featured vibrant young singers from the University of Delaware's Opera Workshop Ensemble under the direction of The Sacred in Opera's chair, Dr. Isai Jess Munoz. Kenyon Adams, Artist in Residence at Yale's Institute of Sacred Music moderated a pre-talk where the creative team discussed the production's process which utilized the contemporary physical theatre methods of Rudolf Laban and Anne Bogart to deepen a performer's sense of full embodiment when working with baroque gesture and historical action on mystical themes. This production was made possible by a generous space grant from The Grace Farms Foundation awarded to

the University of Delaware for engaging in projects specific to fulfilling the mission of the Sacred in Opera Initiative.

The Grace Farms Foundation offers grants of space in lieu of monetary grants. Grace Farms seeks to develop and present new, collaborative, site-specific works at the intersection of the visual, literary, and performing arts. Like the SANAA-designed River building, (Grace Farm's new award-winning home in New Canaan, CT) projects are conceived and created in response to this unique place and the vision it expresses. Invited artists, working in various disciplines investigate the potential of their eighty-acre property, and create both indoor and outdoor art installations, performances and more. Spiritual practices of contemplation and social justice inform their ongoing process of creative experimentation. For more information on Grace Farms, visit: www.GraceFarms.org

From the Editorial Board

Article Submission and the Peer Review Process

Although traditional print journal and monograph publishing is still alive and well, non-traditional forms of publishing such as the Sacred in Opera Web and Blog based format can serve as wonderful supplements or alternatives to traditional scholarship. Web based publications such as ours can enable the broadest possible readership of your research outputs and become an important way to maximize the dissemination and impact of your findings. It is also important to note that the publishing process serves as a networking vehicle. In order to better serve our community members, the SIO committee continues working diligently to refine its formalized peer review process for the vetting of article submissions and materials to our newsletter. We welcome you to visit our updated submission criteria found in the SIO pages of the NOA website. We are always interested in supporting the good work you are doing in the field of Sacred in Opera. Let us hear from you.

2017 NOA Southeastern Regional Conference

September 16, 2017

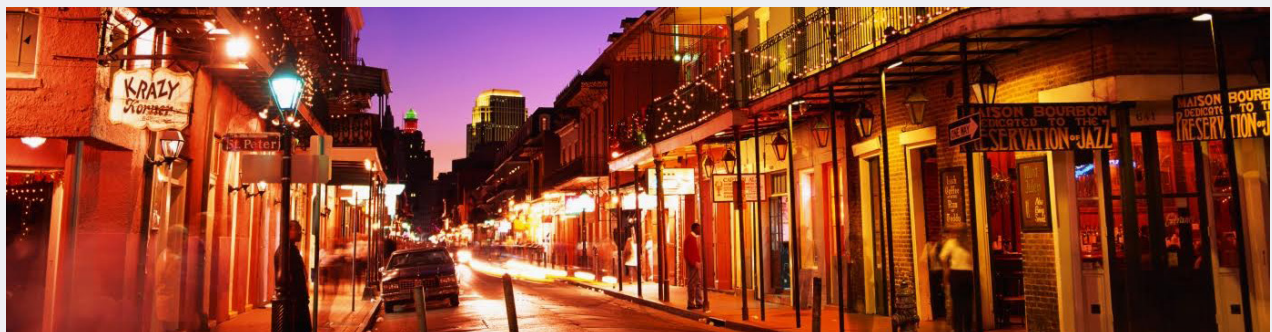
Clayton State University (Morrow, GA)

The NOA Southeastern Region will be hosting a conference, open to all NOA members, on Sep 16, 2017 at Clayton State University (Morrow, GA).

2018 NOA National Convention in New Orleans, LA

Our next convention will be January 3-7, 2018 in the heart of the Big Easy, at the Loews New Orleans Hotel. This convention is themed:

Opera's Tradition and Rebirth: New Orleans 1796-2018
Laissez les bons temps roulez!



Check out all the details of our conference and convention schedules and register at: www.noa.org