

Brooklyn Daily Eagle: Inside

Opera Company of Brooklyn Bursts Onto Cultural Scene Here New Organization Seeks To Provide Venue For Up-and-Coming American Singers

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BROOKLYN — At first glance, it would seem that opera is more than amply represented in Brooklyn. BAM presents modern works that rarely get a listen; and Baroque operas, such as those by Handel and Monteverdi, that are rarely performed. In the traditionally Italian-American area of Bensonhurst, the Amato Opera Company presents classics by Verdi, Puccini and others. In DUMBO, a new company, the Vertical Opera Company, has recently been formed.

Now, a new addition to the borough — the Opera Company of Brooklyn — has been incorporated and is planning its new season.

The goal of the Opera Company of Brooklyn, artistic director and president Jay Meetze explained recently, is to provide professional quality opera to the Brooklyn community, using American singers and artists. (BAM, by contrast, often presents productions by foreign companies.) The new company will not compete with the aforementioned companies, but will rather complement them. "I was just speaking to Joe Mellillo at BAM," he said, "and he thinks we should fill our niche.

"In Manhattan, prices for tickets average about \$68," said Meetze. "In other boroughs like the Bronx that have professional opera companies, tickets are approximately \$35 per person." Tickets to the Brooklyn Opera Company's production of Puccini's "Madama Butterfly" in December, he adds, will cost \$25.

The company's first presentation, a double bill of Mozart's "The Impresario" and Menotti's "The Medium," took place this past Dec. 1 and 2 at St. Ann and the

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. "Madama Butterfly" will take place at New York Technical College's Klitgord Auditorium. Another upcoming performance, "Amal and the Night Visitors" will take place at Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims.

Although the lead players/singers will change with each production and will include artists who normally sing with larger companies, the Brooklyn Opera Company has hired 16 resident artists to sing in secondary roles. It also has hired musicians for a permanent orchestra.

For the 16 aforementioned positions, 150 singers auditioned, Meetze recalls. Asked what he looks for in singers and musicians, he answers, "I always look for potential."

Meetze, who originated the idea of the Brooklyn opera company, is a former singer and orchestra conductor. He has worked with the Cincinnati Opera, at the International Vocal Arts Orchestra in Tel Aviv, and other venues. Among the honorary advisory board members are Cultural Affairs Commissioner Schuyler Chapin; Steve Cohn, Democratic district leader and candidate for City Council; Councilman Ken Fisher; Richard Weitach, former conductor of the Metropolitan Opera, and others.

The next event planned by the Opera Company of Brooklyn will take place on June 11 at 6:30 p.m. at the Brooklyn Heights library branch at Cadman Plaza West. Six performers, including singers from the New York City Opera, Metropolitan Opera and Cincinnati Opera, will present a program called "Per Amore: Opera's Favorite Arias and Duets."

For more information about the Opera Company of Brooklyn, call 986-3294 or access www.operabrooklyn.com.