

Published July 11th , 2018

10th anniversary of Opera in the Park

By Sora O'Doherty



The Orinda Rotary Club will present its 10th annual Opera in the Park in conjunction with Solo Opera. The free performance, which will feature professional opera singers performing favorite arias, duets, and ensembles, that organizers say will thrill even non-opera lovers, usually attracts at least 1,000 people. The concert will take place from 5 to 7 p.m. Sunday, July 22 at Orinda Community Park.

"We have assembled a truly spectacular lineup of talent," says Sylvia Amorino, Solo Opera's artistic director/producer and master of ceremonies for the concert. According to Amorino, the program includes eight singers who have performed at prestigious venues, including San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera San Jose, West Bay Opera, Lamplighters, and Carnegie Hall.

Solo Opera was founded in 2000, and has producing 15 operas and many concerts at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek and other Bay Area venues. Their productions have receiving rave reviews and awards from the press and community including the recent 2016 Arts Recognition Award from AC-5 Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County. Solo Opera has been performing the Orinda Opera in the Park for several years now, and, according to Rotary event chairman Ken Jew, Solo has made the concert even better than it was originally.

The performers include: sopranos Liisa Davila and Diane Squires, mezzo-sopranos Deborah Rosengaus and Leandra Ramm, tenors Michael Orlinsky and Stephen Cannon, baritones Ben Brady and Bradley Kynard and pianist Chun Mei Wilson. The singers will perform well-known selections from operas such as "Turandot," "Don Pasquale," "Carmen," "Don Giovanni," "Barber of Seville," "Marriage of Figaro," "La Bohème," "Die Fledermaus," and much more.

According to the organizers, enjoying live opera has become so expensive that it's almost impossible for the average family to attend. Opera in the Park is a way to introduce children to opera, or even friends who might never attend live opera. There will be running commentary on the works by the master of ceremonies, so everyone will be able to understand the operatic plots. The music has been selected to represent pieces considered very likeable, and the master of ceremony's short explanations of what is happening in each piece or section is designed to make the performance even more enjoyable.

The Rotary Club and Solo Opera invite people to bring their entire families including children, a blanket and/or chairs, and a picnic. Free parking is available. For more information on Solo Opera or the concert, please visit www.SoloOpera.org or email solomail@pacbell.net.

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