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From Broadway to Opera, Orinda Rotary presents Opera in the Park

By Sora O'Doherty



Liisa Davila at a prior Opera in the Park . Photo provided

Solo Opera teams up again this year with the Orinda Rotary Club to present the club's 11th annual Opera in the Park on Sunday, July 28, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Orinda Community Park. Sponsored by the Orinda Rotary, the free performance, which usually attracts at least 1,000 people, is an opportunity to hear professional opera singers perform favorite arias, duets, and ensembles, which organizers say will thrill even non-opera lovers. This year there will also be a few musical theater pieces added to the mix.

"We have assembled a truly spectacular line-up of talent," says Sylvia Amorino, Solo Opera's artistic director and producer and master of ceremonies for the concert. According to Amorino, the program includes eight singers who have performed at San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Symphony, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera San Jose, West Bay Opera, Carnegie Hall, Opera Parallele, etc.

The performers include: sopranos Liisa Davila and Diane Squires, mezzosopranos Silvie Jensen and Katja Heuzeroth, tenors Chester Pidduck and Stephen Cannon, baritones William O'Neill and Bradley Kynard; and pianist Chun Mei Wilson. The singers will perform greatest hits from shows such as "Faust," "Norma," "Carmen," "Rigoletto," "Porgy and Bess," "La Boheme," "La Traviata," and "West Side Story."

Enjoying live opera has become so expensive that it's almost impossible for the average family to attend. Solo Opera and Orinda Rotary's free Opera in the Park is a fine way to introduce children to opera, or even friends who might never go to see and hear live opera, organizers say. There is a running commentary on the works that the master of ceremonies shares so even the novice can understand the operatic plots. The music chosen is very likable, and the master of ceremony's short explanations of what is happening in each piece or section will make it even more enjoyable.

Those who attend the Opera in the Park will enjoy the following program:

"Man of La Mancha" (Leigh) "The Impossible Dream," performed by William O'Neill; "Samson Et Dalila" (Saint-Saens) "Amour! viens aider ma faiblesse," performed by Silvie Jensen; "Werther" (Massenet) "Va! laisse couler mes larmes," performed by Katja Heuzeroth; "La Boheme" (Puccini) "Che gelida manina," performed by Stephen Cannon and "O Mimi, tu piu non torni," performed by William O'Neill and Chester Pidduck; "Faust" (Gounod) "Avant de quitter ces lieux," performed by Bradley Kynard, and "Ah! je ris de me voir si belle en ce miroir," performed by Liisa Davila; "Rigoletto" (Verdi) "Caro nome," performed by Diane Squires, "La donna e mobile," performed by Chester Pidduck, and "Bella figlia dell'amore," performed by Stephen Cannon, Silvie Jensen, Diane Squires, and Bradley Kynard.

After intermission, the program takes a turn towards Broadway with two numbers from "West Side Story" (Bernstein) "Maria," performed by Chester Pidduck and "I Feel Pretty," performed by Katja Heuzeroth. Also from the Broadway stage are the selections from "Porgy and Bess" (Gershwin) "Summertime," performed by Diane Squires, "A Woman is a Sometime Thing," performed by Bradley Kynard, and "My Man's Gone Now," performed by Silvie Jensen.

Rounding out the evening will be selections from "Norma" (Bellini) "Casta diva," performed by Liisa Davila, "Mira, o Norma," performed by Katja Heuzeroth and Diane Squires; "Carmen" (Bizet) "Habanera," performed by Silvie Jensen, "Votre toast," performed by William O'Neill, and "Je dis que rien ne m'epouvante," performed by Liisa Davila; and from "La Traviata" (Verdi) "Parigi, o cara," performed by Stephen Cannon and Liisa Davila, and "Libiamo ne' lieti calici," performed by Stephen Cannon, Diane Squires, and all the cast will bring the program to a close.

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