



Notes from IVAI



2014

Today's world of opera is full of challenges. You young students can save it. The uncertain financial situation, new audiences, new styles, new ideas, and many new operas all serve to make this a rather precarious moment in the history of opera. The one sure thing is that you, the next generation, are going to make a difference. You have the training, the energy, the wisdom, and, most of all, the talent to carry on the best of the operatic traditions and to infuse the world of opera with renewed energy; to touch everyone with great music, great singing, and brilliant productions!

Joan Dornemann and Paul Nadler

News Notes

♪ **Julie Adams** and **Yi Li** won the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Of Julie's performance *The New York Times* wrote: "Her voice is rich, full and slightly earthy in an expressive way." Yi Li was praised by the *Times* for his "ardent account" of the *Traviata* aria and "was better still" in the *Werther* aria. Julie will sing Blanche in Merola's production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* this summer. Yi Li was the representative of China at Cardiff in 2013.



Yi Li

(Photograph courtesy of Pierre-Etienne Bergeron)

♪ IVAI alumni semifinalists at the Council auditions included **Natalie Cummings**, **Scott Russell**, and **Diego Silva**. Scott will sing the Commendatore at Merola. Diego was Tamino at Bellas Artes in Mexico City.

♪ The Gerda Lissner competition honored several IVAI singers: **Mario Chang** won the Top Prize; **Sava Vemic** a first prize; **Yi Li** and **Diego Silva** second prizes; **Courtney Johnson**, **Maya Lahyani**, and **Jamez McCorkle** third prizes; and **César Delgado** and **Shelley Jackson** encouragement awards. Sava will join the Lindemann program at the Met in the fall. Jamez was also a winner of the Brava Opera! competition in San Francisco.

♪ **Chen Reiss** seems to sing almost all the roles at the Vienna State Opera, such as Sophie, Ilia and Adina. She also was Pamina in Amsterdam. **Hui He** was Madama Butterfly at the Met.

♪ A number of IVAI participants won prizes in the Albanese/Puccini competition. **Mario Chang** and **Courtney Johnson** won third prizes; **Yasmine Levi-Ellentuck**, **Shelley Jackson**, **Jamez McCorkle**, **Ricardo Rivera**, and **Yohan Yi** won grants; and **Ashley Kerr** and **Karolina Pilou** won encouragement awards.

♪ Opera in Williamsburg's fall production was *Il Trovatore*, with **Yasmine Levi-Ellentuck** as Leonora, **Claudia Chapa** as Azucena, and **Gustavo Feulien** as di Luna.

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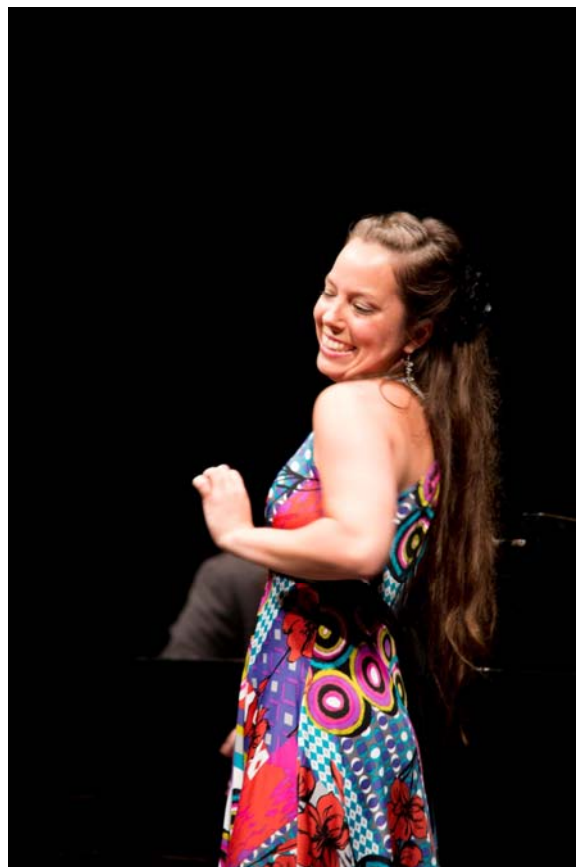
♪ In April Naama Zahavi-Ely once again produced an IVAI-studded opera. *Don Pasquale* featured **Carlos Conde**, **Meechot Marrero**, **Marco Nisticò**, and **Tommy Wazelle**. Carlos sang Don Pasquale and also directed, and **Jorge Parodi** was the conductor. Marco was Figaro in Sarasota's production of *Barbiere* and will be at Caramoor in July in *Les Vêpres siciliennes*.

♪ **Jasmine Muhammad** sang Mimì with Pittsburgh Opera. As one of the Three Ladies in Pittsburgh's *Zauberflöte*, her soprano was praised by *Opera News* as "gorgeous" and "plush." **Boya Wei** sings Suor Genovieffa in *Suor Angelica* at Crested Butte. **Deanna Breiwick** will perform at the Bard Music Festival in August.

♪ **Adam Frandsen** was Romeo in Gounod's opera at the Copenhagen Opera Festival and Cavaradossi at the Aalborg Opera Festival, as well as Sergei in Shostakovich's *Moscow* and *Cheryomushki* at the Sempeoper, Dresden.

♪ **Ashley Prewett** sang Masetto, Zaretsky, Angelotti, and others in Stuttgart. **Laura Bohn** toured the Netherlands with VocaalLAB and ISH, in a new adaptation of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, singing and dancing the role of Nerone. **Elizabeth Pojanowski** sang in Little Opera's production of Rossini's *Opportunity Makes the Thief*. **Ana María Martínez** was Rusalka with Eric Owens for Chicago Lyric Opera. She will sing Carmen at Santa Fe this summer, Cio-Cio-San in Houston, and Mimi with Dallas Opera.

♪ **Meghan Lindsay** was Alcina with Montreal's Opera Atelier. The Atelier production of *Hänsel und Gretel* was loaded with IVAI singers: **Frédérique Drolet** was Gretel, **Emma Char Hänsel**, **Rachel Tremblay** the Witch, **Florie Valiquette** the Fée Rosée, **Claire Bellemare** Gertrude, and **Ryan Ciaran Peter**.



Frédérique Drolet

(Photograph courtesy of Pierre-Etienne Bergeron)

♪ **Jean-Michel Richer** sang Pang in Montreal Opera's *Turandot*, conducted by Paul Nadler. He was also Bardolph in their production of *Falstaff*. **Chantale Nurse** was Clara in their *Porgy and Bess*.

♪ **Naomi Johns** won first prize in the Joan Sutherland/Richard Bonyngé Bel Canto competition in Australia. Opera Index's Robert Crosby Award was given to **Yohan Yi**, and **Felicia Moore** won an encouragement award from them. **Faustine de Mones** won a grant from Career Bridges.



Florie Valiquette

(Photograph courtesy of Pierre-Etienne Bergeron)

♪ **Sidney Outlaw** won a second prize in the Walter Naumberg competition. Sidney's performance at New York City Opera's farewell concert was deemed "outstanding" by *The New York Times*. Second prize in the American Traditions competition went to **Mikki Sodergren**.

♪ Yanni's new album, *Inspirito*, features **Lauren Jelencovich**, along with Plácido Domingo, Renee Fleming, and Rolando Villazón.

♪ **Jessica Rose Cambio** was a third-place winner in the Leyla Gencer competition in Istanbul. In January she sang Mimì at the Royal Albert Hall in Francesca Zambello's production of *La Bohème*. Her soprano was "ripe, vivacious, affecting, and her presence entirely disarming," according to the *London Times*. **Zulimar López Hernández** sang Musetta with another cast. Jessica will repeat the role, as well as that of Donna Elvira, in Macedonia and Bangkok. She was a semifinalist in Operalia and received grants from both the Richard Tucker and Gerda Lissner foundations.

♪ **Marissa Simmons** was cast as Lucretia with the Frost Opera Theatre. She won the Golden Key International Honour Society Visual and Performing Arts Achievement Award. **Katarzyna Sadej** appeared in the London Olympics in a solo recital for the International Judo Federation closing ceremonies. She has formed the Trio Canadese with Amanda Johnston and **Allison Arends**, and they tour the U.S. and Canada.

♪ **César Torruella** sang Dr. Bartolo at the Moores Opera House, and also appeared in Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree*. **Guy Mannheim** has been keeping busy. He made his Oper Leipzig debut as Gunther in Wagner's *Die Feen*, which was also presented at

Bayreuth. He was in a Wagner gala in China, sang the Drum Major in *Wozzeck* and Gastone in *La Traviata* in Tel Aviv, Siegmund in Leipzig, and the four servants in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, among others.

♪ Next season's Met Opera schedule includes **Yonghoon Lee** repeating his role of Don Carlo. His more recent performances included Manrico in *Il Trovatore* with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Arrigo in *I Vespri Siciliani* in Madrid, Andrea Chénier in Zurich, Don José with the Royal Opera, and Calaf with Bavarian State Opera.

♪ Pacific Opera Victoria's *Ariadne auf Naxos* starred the "pert and personable" (*Victoria Times Colonist*) **Suzanne Rigden** as Zerbinetta, who nailed "her huge, dazzlingly virtuosic recitative and aria." Featured in the cast were other IVAI alumni: **Aidan Ferguson** as Dryad, **Eve-Lyn de la Hays** as Echo, and **Riccardo Ianello** as Scaramuccio. Suzanne sings Zerlina with Opera Nova Scotia in May and Adele with Maritime Concert Opera and Vancouver Opera. Aidan will join the Internationale Opernwerkstatt in Basel, Switzerland, in October.



Suzanne Rigden

(Photograph courtesy of Pierre-Etienne Bergeron)

♪ **Gina Pellegrino's** performance in *Mother of Us All* at Manhattan School was praised by *The New York Times* as "charming" and "a lively standout." **Scott Russell** made a "stern, imposing Daniel Webster," said *Opera News*.

♪ First prize at the Neue Stimmen 2013 went to **Nadine Sierra**. Nadine was featured in an article in the February issue of *Opera News*. At Glimmerglass last summer she sang Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, and in March was Gilda at Boston Lyric Opera under the direction of Tomer Zvulun.

She also sang Gilda in her debut at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples and will repeat the role in Atlanta. She also sings the Countess and Musetta at San Francisco Opera.

♪ *Opera News* wrote of **Corrie Donovan**'s nymph in the Fort Worth production of *Ariadne auf Naxos* that she "sang and acted with finesse and charm." **Eleazar Rodriguez**, at the Karlsruhe opera, sang Tamino, Tonio, and David in *Der Meistersinger*.

♪ **Kathryn Lewek** won third prize at Operalia. She will return to her role as the Queen of the Night at the Met next season. She went to Tasmania in the spring to sing Angelica in Handel's *Orlando*. Of her singing in the *Messiah* with the Oratorio Society, *The New York Times* wrote: "Communicative verve and thrilling beauty came together in the soprano Kathryn Lewek." She was also the Queen with Washington National Opera, will repeat the role in Houston, and will sing Lucia with Toledo Opera next year.

♪ After ditching the bachelor on *The Bachelor* TV show, **Sharleen Joynt** was the cover for Flakermilli in the Met's *Arabella*. In Karlsruhe, she sang Marie, Zerbinetta, and Adele. **Mary-Hollis Hundley** sings Vitelia in *La Clemenza di Tito* at Opera in the Heights.

♪ "Appropriately tyrannical as Lizzie's ill-fated father" (*Opera News*) was **Daniel Mobbs** in the Boston Lyric Opera production of Beeson's *Lizzie Borden*. Mostly Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* last summer featured **Rachel Frenkel** as Cherubino.

♪ **Rebecca Blinder** performs in Concerts in Motion, a series of outreach concerts in the New York area. She appeared in "Opera Improv" at the National Opera Center. **Claire Kuttler** made her debut with the Santa Barbara Chamber Orchestra in the children's opera *Green Eggs and Ham* by Robert Kapilow. As a young artist with Palm Beach Opera, she covered Antonia and sang Alcina and Emily Webb in Rorem's *Our Town*.

♪ **Tanya Roberts** and **Jacqueline Woodley** sang in *Fledermaus* with Edmonton Opera. Tanya is in residence with Lyric Opera of Chicago's chorus. She sang Anna in *The King and I* and Gianetta in *The Gondoliers* with Ohio Light Opera. **Deanna Pauletto** will cover the role of Carmen at Academy of the West this summer. The Escamillo will be **Thomas Cannon**.

♪ In October **Shenyang** was a soloist in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony conducted by Alan Gilbert. He was the Speaker in the Met's *Zauberflöte*. **Pierre Rancourt** sang Fauré's *Requiem* with L'Ensemble de musique sacrée de Québec and Honegger's *Cantata de Noël* with Les Rhapsodes. He will participate in the Festival Opéra de Saint-Eustache this summer.

♪ **Mithra Mastropiero** debuted at the National Theater of Croatia in Osijek as Norma and Abigaille. *Glas Slavonije* wrote of her Norma: "A jewel of bel canto shone on the stage." Martina Arroyo's *Falstaff* featured **Hyona Kim** as Mistress Quickly.

♪ **Julie Boulianne**'s busy schedule included Rosina with the Orlando Philharmonic, the Kitchen Boy in *Rusalka* at the Met ("vibrant," said *The New York Times*), Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Oratorio Society and the Orchestra of St. Luke's in Carnegie Hall, the *St. Matthew Passion* in Montreal, *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the Cleveland Orchestra, and *A Midsummer's Night Dream* with the Baltimore Orchestra. She will be Prince Orlofsky in Vancouver Opera's *Fledermaus*.

♪ **Mario Chang** sang the title role in *L'Amico Fritz* with Miami Lyric Opera. The *South Florida Classical Review* commented: "Tenor Mario Chang is a real find. The Guatemalan tenor makes a dashing, charismatic Fritz. His golden lyric instrument and ringing high notes recall the young José Carreras. In Fritz's aria of despair when he fears he has lost his beloved Suzel, Chang's ardent phrasing and impassioned declamation suggested a star in the making." Mario goes to Frankfurt next season, and will sing Rodolfo.

♪ **Jonathan Blalock** "proved integral to the success" of Gregory Spears's *Paul's Case*, produced by Prototype Opera in New York, according to *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross. He "had no trouble with the high-lying music, his sweet, pale voice shining through the silvery mist of Spears's instrumentation." Jonathan sings in the world premiere of *An American Soldier* by Huang Ruo with Washington National Opera in June.

♪ The IVAI Met Opera stalwarts continue to perform regularly. **Eduardo Valdes** was Flavio in *Norma*, Sir Bruno Robertson in *I Puritani*, and Spoletta in *Tosca*. **Joshua Benaim** covered the Major-Domo In *Andrea Chénier*, and **Monica**

Yunus covered Despina. **Marco Nisticò** was the Doctor in *Two Boys* and **David Fry** covered Peter. **Kyle Pfortmiller** was the Major-Domo in *Chénier* and Brian's Father in *Two Boys*. **Tony Stevenson** was the Innkeeper in *Rosenkavalier* and Incredible in *Andrea Chénier*. **Oren Gradus** sang Colline and also returned to Pittsburgh Opera for performances of Ramfis in *Aida* and Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*, and makes his house debut with Baltimore Opera as Zaccaria in *Nabucco*.

♪ **David Bižić** made his Met debut as Albert in *Werther*. *Classical Voice* thought he had an "impressive richly textured voice." David also sang Don Giovanni for Maribor Opera and Leporello for Opera National Montpellier and the Wiener Staatsoper.

♪ The New York premiere at Carnegie Hall of Stephen Paulus's Holocaust Memorial oratorio, *To Be Certain of the Dawn*, features **Alok Kumar**. Alok sang Don José with Cedar Rapids Opera in January. **David Lomeli** was the Duke with Deutsche Oper Berlin and Lord Percy in *Anna Bolena* with Opéra National de Bordeaux. **José Sacín** sang two Figaros, in *Nozze* with George Mason Opera and in *Barbieri* with Opera Camerata, Washington.



Evan Kardon and José Sacín

(Photograph courtesy of Pierre-Etienne Bergeron)

♪ **Hilo Baggio** sang Norma and Gilda with the Israeli Opera, as well as the Brahms *Requiem* with the Valencia Orchestra and Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* with the Jerusalem Symphony. **Marta Herman** is a member of the Opera Studio at Oper Frankfurt. She was a Wood Nymph in their production of *Rusalka*. In Linz **Mari Moriya** has branched out

into new roles. She sang Pamina, Woglinde in *Das Rheingold*, Helmwig in *Walküre*, and Micaela.

♪ In Ottawa in April, Opera Lyra's production of *Madama Butterfly* featured **Shuying Li** as Cio-Cio-San, **Raquel Suarez Groen** as Kate Pinkerton, and **Brian Wehrle** as the Imperial Commissioner.

♪ **Claudia Chapa** will be a young artist at Glimmerglass this summer and will sing the Witch in *Hänsel und Gretel* with Opera in the Heights. **Luthando Qave** sings Leporello with the Royal Swedish Opera, Stockholm. **Emily Dorn** (née Duncan-Brown) is with the Dresden Semperoper, singing Micaëla, Fiordiligi, and Violetta. **Gan-ya Ben-Gur Akselrod** is with the Kammeroper Vienna and sings Servilla in *La Clemenza di Tito* and Clorinda in *Cenerentola*.



Claire Bellemare and Elsa Querón



Shauna Yarnell, Carol Leger, and Evan Kardon

(Photographs courtesy of Pierre-Etienne Bergeron)

2013 Summer Programs

IVAI's 2013 summer programs were full of highlights. There were guest appearances by Dawn Upshaw and Patricia Racette. The productions of *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Tel Aviv and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* in both Israel and Canada were highly successful. Perhaps most exciting of all was the presence at Virginia Tech of preeminent composer Carlisle Floyd, who shared his vision of his gripping opera *Susannah*. Most of the cast of *Susannah* then performed the opera in Israel, where the audience responded with understanding and sympathy in spite of the very American setting of the piece.



Carlisle Floyd

Joshua Major



In 2012 Toronto-born Joshua Major became Chair of Opera Studies at the New England Conservatory of Music after having spent 20 years on the faculty of the University of Michigan, where he oversaw their opera program. All through his career he has been a constant presence at IVAI programs, as a director in Tel Aviv and Montreal and in 2014 at Virginia Tech.

From the age of 16 Josh knew he wanted to be a director, no doubt influenced by growing up in a home where his father, Leon, had a career as an opera director. Josh says he had an intuitive understanding of what the job involved. At the University of Ottawa he studied English and theater – and also the clarinet and guitar.

After graduating Josh was invited by Opera Omaha to direct *La Cenerentola* and accepted the job willingly, not knowing enough, at 23, to be intimidated. Thus, his future was launched. In 1992 he went to Michigan, where his job was “teaching singers to act.”

In 2003 Josh became the Artistic Director of the Pine Mountain Music Festival, which is based in Houghton, Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula. This

classical music festival produces opera, symphony, and chamber music and performs throughout the Western Upper Peninsula of Michigan. There is also a resident artists' program for a small group of young professionals who receive coaching and performance opportunities.

Josh met Joan and Paul in Chautauqua in 1986. His IVAI history began in 1993, when he went to Tel Aviv, joining his father, to direct *Le Nozze di Figaro*. These were the early years of the program, and Josh remembers how exciting it was. There were five or six directors involved in a healthy competition. It was a fertile period for him, and sometimes he worked on more than one production. Highlights from the early years include *Le Tragédie de Carmen*, *Rusalka*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Pelléas et Mélisandre*, *Werther*, and *Cendrillon*. More recent standouts are *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias*, *L'Impressions de Pelléas*, and *Il Tabarro*.

In those days there were no similar programs. Now many others exist, but Josh loves the Sadna because of the quality and experience of the faculty, the lively city of Tel Aviv, and the international mix of the students.

Josh began to direct at the Montreal CVAI program in 2004 with *Dr. Miracle*, a work he is excited to revisit this summer along with the Peter Brook *Carmen*. He finds it a stimulating project to rethink these pieces after so many years.

A particular favorite composer of Josh's is Handel, and in the future he hopes to direct more of his operas, as well as those of Janáček and Benjamin Britten.



Jessica Scarlato

(Photograph courtesy of Pierre-Etienne Bergeron)

Hemdi Kfir



The new Artistic Director of IVAI's summer program in Israel is Hemdi Kfir, who has long been associated with the Sadna.

Growing up in a theatrical family, Hemdi began her musical education early, taking lessons on the recorder. She attended an arts school and soon became interested in voice. Then she became a pupil of Bibiana Goldental, a well-known mezzo-soprano.

Always interested in languages (her mother is a professional translator), Hemdi started learning French in high school and Spanish during her army training. After the army, she took up Italian and went to Florence for a few months at a time to study the language. During her university studies she added Russian and German to the mix. In the early 1990s, with the huge influx of Russian immigrants to Israel, Hemdi was hired as a language coach for many Russian actors who needed to lose their Russian accents in Hebrew.

In 1991, IVAI's fifth year, she began to work with the program in the office, having been recommended by a friend of her mother's. This was Hemdi's first real exposure to opera. Up until

then she had regarded it as an inferior form. Not knowing much about the world of opera, she was “clueless” as to the fame of the IVAI faculty. Now, since she was able to sit in on lessons given by some of the world’s greatest singers, she discovered that opera was an art that combined heightened emotions with words and music, and she fell in love with it by the end of the first year.

Watching great masters pass on their knowledge and wisdom to new generations would be a wonderful way to spend her life, she thought. In particular, sitting in on Bob Cowart’s and Nico Castel’s language coaching sessions convinced her that this was what she would like to make a career of. With this goal in mind, Hemdi received several scholarships to study in Italy, Germany, and France. She then went to the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University to combine the disciplines of music and language. These new accomplishments enabled her to become a language coach for IVAI, and in that capacity she traveled with them to Japan, China, Puerto Rico, and Portland, Oregon.

In 2007 Hemdi was hired by the Metropolitan Opera to work as a language coach on a new production of *Macbeth*. She still remembers her first rehearsal on a Saturday, when Howard Watkins (whom she knew from IVAI) had to guide her through the labyrinthine backstage premises of the opera house. Since then she has worked on numerous productions as an Italian coach – in the 2013-14 season, *Così fan tutte*, *Falstaff*, *Andrea Chénier*, and *Tosca*. She also coaches in Italian in Israel and elsewhere.

Hemdi believes it is important to continue Joan and Paul’s vision of IVAI’s role in Israel. The Sadna brings the world to Israel. Not only do the Israeli students benefit from meeting the international faculty and young singers from the rest of the world, but the international singers get to know Israel and become ambassadors of goodwill upon their return to their respective countries. And the Israeli public is exposed to the highest world standards through high-class entertainment at a low cost.



Jose Miguel Sacin, Carol Leger, Evan Kardon, Evelyn Shreves, Marc-Antoine d'Aragon, Florie Gauthier and Yiselle Blum.



Carin Gilfry, Evan Kardon, Marc-Antoine d'Aragon, Elsa Quéron, Stephanie Newman, César Delgado, Yiselle Blum, Suzanne Rigden, Taras Chmil, Mark Nimar, Evelyn Shreves, Claire Bellemare, Emma Char and Blanca Rodríguez Torres

(Photographs courtesy of Pierre-Etienne Bergeron)