



PINE MOUNTAIN
MUSIC FESTIVAL

VOL. 16 NO. 1, SPRING 2009 | OPERA • CLASSICAL • JAZZ

Notes

Festival Adopts New Look

In a time when the arts face serious economic challenges, audience growth is crucial to the survival of festivals such as our own. This spring, the Festival is adopting a new visual style to capture the joyful spirit of the artists and performances that occur throughout the season, to better inform our current patrons, and to reach out to new audiences.

This newsletter marks the unveiling of the new PMMF logo, which is a significant part of our new identity.

Designed to better communicate who we are, the new logo incorporates a music note, a mountain, a suggestion of an "M" (for Mountain and Music), and a wave to suggest ongoing movement and the lakes that surround the Festival. Our goal is to make the mark more suggestive of a music festival, and to strengthen the typeface of the words "Pine Mountain Music Festival" so they are more readable in multiple formats.

We are also adopting a more colorful, bold approach to our website and printed materials.

To make these materials more accessible and eye-catching, we are making extensive use of photos from past seasons – be sure to check out the website (www.pmmf.org) and look for our posters in local businesses.

With these new materials, we aim to make it clear that the Festival welcomes everyone and that opera and classical music can be enjoyed by all. Anyone who has attended one of our performances knows that PMMF artists are very approachable and our seasons are filled with entertainment and excitement. On a summer evening in the U.P., a Pine Mountain Music Festival event is "the place to be!"

We have reached this point of strengthened outreach with the help of Monte Consulting in Houghton, whose specialty is strategic communication planning and graphic presentation.

As you browse through our new materials, we welcome your feedback and suggestions. Please direct any communication to festival@pmmf.org, or use the contact form on the pmmf.org website. Your comments will be valuable in our efforts to introduce new audiences to the joy of opera and classical music in our beautiful corner of the world.

Lively, Diverse Season Ahead

—Joshua Major, Artistic Director



I am excited to reveal in these pages the Festival's 19th season, entitled *Anything Goes*. Many of you have expressed a desire to hear classic concerts that go beyond classical, so this summer we are expanding our programming to include elements of jazz and folk music; hence the *Anything Goes* theme. There should be something for everyone!

It will be an honor to welcome the Ellen Rowe Trio, (with bassist Paul Keller and drummer Pete Siers) to the U.P. These are three of Michigan's finest jazz musicians, much in demand across the country. The virtuosic duo of Stas Venglevsky and Misha Litvin will present a lively evening of classical, folk and traditional music and everything in between – unique music-making, not to be missed. These two groups will bring a nice diversity of music to the Festival.

I am very proud of the six Resident Opera Artists whom you will meet this summer.

Lucy Thrasher and I were so impressed with their artistry when we heard them audition last fall. Join us at our opening Galas – the Chippewa Club Gala and the Keweenaw Kick-Off Gala – where you can meet them up-close and personal at the beginning of the season. Later they will present an evening of music by Cole Porter under the inspired guidance of Festival regular Jerry Deput.

Following the Cole Porter Revue, the ROAs will present the hilarious farce by Cimarosa, *The Secret Marriage (Il matrimonio segreto)*. This opera can be enjoyed by all ages. Cimarosa was a contemporary of Mozart, and this is still his most popular opera. Emperor Leopold II was so pleased with its premiere (1792) that he fed the cast dinner and then immediately had them perform the whole show again! I am especially pleased to welcome Joe Mechavich, (Conductor) and Nick Olcott (Stage Director) to the Festival. These first-timers to the U.P. will bring great joy and energy to this production. Set in the 1960's, it promises to be a riotous and endearing production.

Continued on page 2 1

Lively Season Ahead (Cont'd from page 1)

I am very happy that we are able to continue the Resident Chamber Musician Program. We have invited a woodwind quintet and a string quartet to be in residence for almost three weeks.

They will present their own concerts and be a part of our opera orchestra. While in residence, they will be mentored by the Bergonzi String Quartet and Margaret Donaghue and get much-valued performing experience. There are few opportunities such as this for emerging professional chamber musicians, and it is my hope that this program will get national attention like our program for young singers.

World-renowned organist Christina Harmon will pay her first visit to the Festival. Originally from Menominee and now a resident of Dallas, she has played on many of the great organs of the world and we are proud to host her this summer.

Rounding out the season will be our great friends in the Bergonzi String Quartet, true professionals who make superlative music and at the same time convey an infectious bonhomie. They will be joined by clarinetist Margaret Donaghue to play Brahms' haunting and beautiful Clarinet Quintet, Opus 115.

This will be an exhilarating season. I feel strongly that our Festival has never been more important. There are many problems facing the world, but music has the power to remind us of our humanity, of what we have in common, and how to love. I urge you to join us, so we can be together as one in the concert hall this summer.

OPERation Imagination, In-Schools Program

For several years, Pine Mountain Music Festival has taken an educational experience into area schools. Known as OPERation Imagination, the program involves a small number of trained singers and a pianist going into elementary and middle schools for a presentation of selected opera scenes, always involving the children themselves.

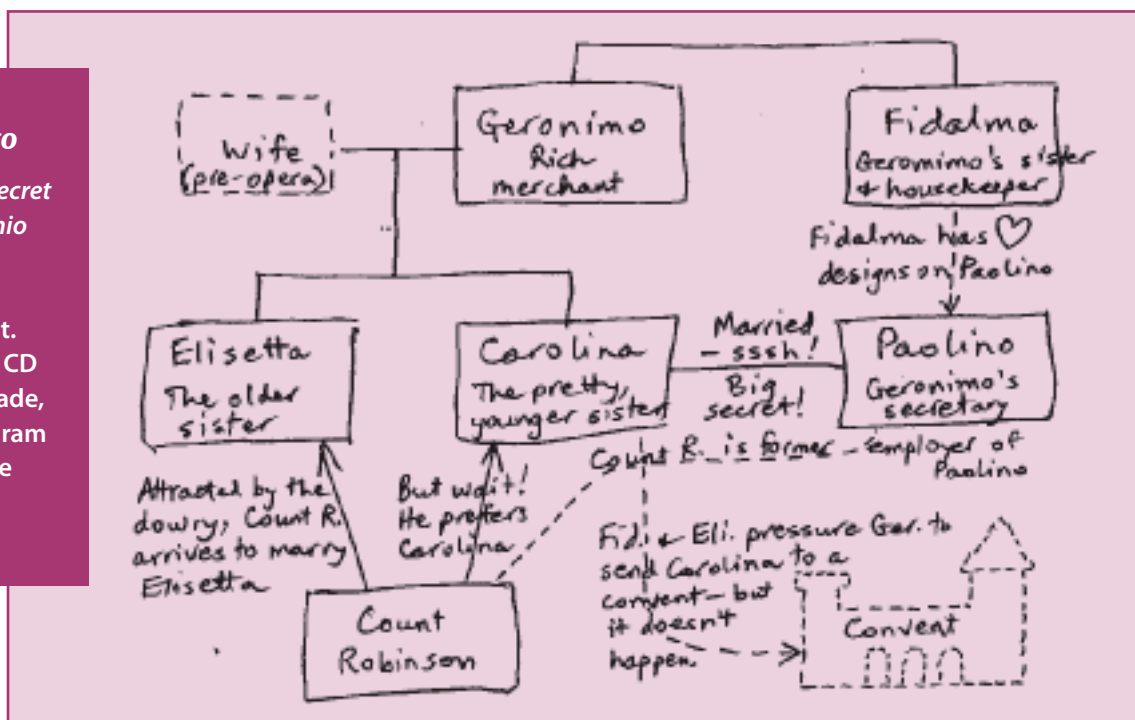
At its peak, several years ago, the program reached 3,800 students in 19 schools in four counties. Currently the program is scaled back due to lack of grants. However, this year we have a \$900 grant from Copper Country Community Arts Council, which, although smaller than the actual cost of the program and smaller than previous grants, will allow us to carry out the program in several Keweenaw schools.

OPERation Imagination is a true community service and an important part of the Festival's educational outreach. We are grateful for any gifts and grants that enable us to take the program into more schools.

The Secret Marriage *Il matrimonio segreto*

Our 2009 opera is *The Secret Marriage* (or *Il matrimonio segreto* in Italian), by Domenico Cimarosa, a contemporary of Mozart. Peter Van Pelt bought a CD when the choice was made, and then drew this diagram of the main points of the storyline.

Enjoy the show!





Jazz Benefit Event In Kingsford

Big Band Jazz is coming to the Upper Peninsula in support of the Pine Mountain Music Festival.

The nationally-renowned and award-winning 20-piece DePaul University Big Band Ensemble under the direction of exclusive Yamaha Artist Bob Lark will perform at the Kingsford High School Auditorium at 7:30 pm, Saturday, April 25, 2009.

In addition to the evening concert, the band will conduct a jazz clinic during the day for local high school music students and music directors. The clinic will offer advanced technique lessons by instrument section as well as training in improvisation and music theory. There will be illustrations performed by the band. The clinic is free for high school students and directors.

Concert tickets are only \$10 per person and may be purchased in advance at the following locations:

- First National Bank of Iron Mountain/Kingsford
- Northern Michigan Bank
- First National Bank of Norway
- First National Bank of Niagara
- The Music Tree, Iron Mountain
- Cuisine Art, Iron Mountain
- Four Seasons Resort, Pembine

This event has been conceived and organized by a local committee with three aims: it will provide a lively evening of jazz music for the local community, will provide a way for young people to learn about the dynamic world of jazz, and will benefit Pine Mountain Music Festival. This project is supported in part by a grant from the Dickinson Area Community Foundation. For more information, call 715-508-0997 or email gbseymour@tds.net.

Festival Beats the Odds, Has Highly Successful 2008

Well done, all! We are happy to report that the Festival had a very successful 2008, both artistically and financially.

After the big deficit in our 2007 fiscal year, the Festival faced the need to downsize our 2008 season. We recognized the risk in this, even as arts organizations across the country were doing the same thing. Fortunately, Artistic Director Joshua Major was able to give us a wonderful season that had the usual high level of artistic quality but was less expensive.

The artistic accomplishment was mirrored in a healthy financial result in fiscal 2008 (ending 9/30/08). Not only did our operating budget end in the black, but we were able to pay back \$50,000 of our \$125,000 debt. This was an astounding result in the face of a weak economy, and a great blessing to the Festival.

“This was an astounding result in the face of a weak economy, and a great blessing to the Festival.”

There were several reasons for this. One was the less expensive production costs of the season. Another was the generosity of our supporters. We told you about the 2007 deficit and the resultant financial peril, and the results speak for themselves. Neither

the number of Friends’ donations (481) nor the amount they donated (\$195,000) was a record, but in the context of a declining economy, these were impressive numbers, and we were gratified by the level of support.

A third reason was the downsizing of Festival staff in early 2008, made possible by the willingness of several trustees to serve on the Management Committee that was formed in lieu of an executive director.

Finally, the Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation generously made full payment of a grant that was intended to cover executive director compensation even though we did not have an executive director for the full year.

After the 2008 season finished, we sent out patron surveys to ticket buyers. More than 130 were returned. We found overwhelming support for the strategy of a downsized season, and many comments about how important the Festival is to our communities. All in all, 2008 was a triumphant year for the Festival, and we thank everyone for pulling on the same rope.

Introducing Our 2009 Resident Opera Artists

—Lucy Thrasher, Program Director



I'm pleased to be writing my annual Resident Opera Artist audition tour report, especially in this time of cutbacks and opera company closings! Thank you, PMMF stalwarts, for continuing to support this venture.

This year saw another increase in the number and quality of ROA applicants—about 400 applicants for six positions! Joshua Major and I auditioned over 200 in person during full audition days in Chicago and Ann Arbor, and four days in New York City.

*Our 2009 opera, Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*, is a fast-paced comic romp including ensemble numbers with the singers delivering text non-stop in a delirious manner.*

*This is not a slow, lyrical type opera at all; rather, it requires a slightly different kind of singer from last season's *Carmen*. I am delighted to introduce our cast to you. You will love each and every voice you hear.*



Soprano **Emily Murdock**, singing the role of Carolina, comes to us from Boulder, Colorado, where she received a Master's in Voice Performance. While at CU, she sang such roles as Susanna in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and Papagena in *The Magic Flute*. We loved Emily's sparkling, easy high notes

and fluid, theatrical performance. We were very interested in Emily in 2007 when she first sang for us, but we had no appropriate role for her, so it is particularly satisfying to offer her an opportunity this summer.



Soprano **Heather Youngquist** comes to us from Indiana University and will sing the role of Elisetta. Her undergraduate degree is from the University of Iowa, where she appeared in several operas and as a symphonic soloist. At IU, she appeared as Frau Fluth in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Heather has excellent comic timing and a wide variety of vocal colors, which she employs in a flexible, expressive manner. Her audition performance of a Handel aria literally had us crying our eyes out by the end! Quite a feat, in a long day of auditions!



Our mezzo-soprano is returning for her third summer in the U.P.! **Alexandra Christoforakis** sang with us in 2005 and 2006, performing the role of 2nd Lady in *The Magic Flute*. She has degrees from NYU and the University of Maryland, where she was in the Opera Program, singing roles such as Fidalma in *Il matrimonio segreto*, the role she will perform for us. Alex has been busy in the Baltimore area, appearing as Alma March in *Little Women* and Brigitta in *Die Tote Stadt* with area companies and singing in the ensemble of Baltimore Opera.



Tenor **Bernard Holcomb** recently sang the leading role of Lensky in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at the University of Michigan, where he completed his Master's in Voice Performance. He is singing as a studio artist in the winter opera season of Sarasota Opera in 2009, performing the role of Federico in *L'amico Fritz*. Bernard's undergraduate degree is from the Eastman School of Music. He has a sweet, clean tenor tone quality and is wonderfully open and sincere as an actor. He will sing the role of Paolino in this summer's opera.



We have heard baritone **Robert Balonek** in past audition seasons and have enjoyed his musicality, intensity and all-around great voice. We are thrilled he accepted our offer to sing the role of the Count this season. Bob spent the past two summers with Central City Opera's apprentice programs and already has gained a lot of performing experience. He is a graduate of SUNY-Purchase, where he sang the title role in *Gianni Schicchi*, the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and other major roles.



Our final ROA is bass-baritone **Carl DuPont**. Carl sang a wonderful audition full of great text energy, clean high tones and gorgeous low notes. He will be performing the role of Geronimo in *Il matrimonio segreto*, which is a bit like the role of Dulcamara in *Elixir of Love*, which he recently sang at Indiana

University. Carl has degrees from Eastman and IU. He has appeared as Ramfis in *Aida* with the Cedar Rapids Opera and Plutone in *L'Orfeo* with the Bloomington Early Music Festival.

Introducing the 2009 Resident Chamber Musicians

We are pleased to welcome the Clarke String Quartet and the Sonrisa Woodwind Quintet to the Festival this summer.

The Clarke String Quartet is based in the Miami, Florida area and have been playing together since the summer of 2008. They are currently being coached by the Bergonzi String Quartet and their work together will continue this summer. This is a diverse group of graduate students with a lot of experience playing together in the Miami area. I am sure they will be excited to head north this June where the climate is more reasonable than South Florida.



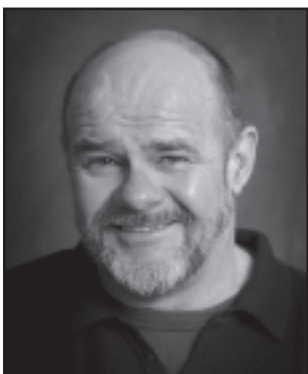
The Sonrisa Quintet is based in Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan, and hence are not climate challenged. This is a passionate and excited group of undergraduate musicians. This recently formed quintet will be guided by the Bergonzi Quartet and Margaret Donaghue and will bring a wonderful new dimension to the Festival.

—Joshua Major, Artistic Director



Joseph Mechavich, Conductor

Joseph Mechavich has been praised as a conductor of “authority and warmth” with “a meticulous liaison between stage and pit.” Recently he has conducted *Madama Butterfly* for New York City Opera and Utah Opera, and *Porgy and Bess* for Deutsche Oper Berlin. Among the opera companies for which he has conducted, are Kentucky Opera and Opera Birmingham, where he is Principal Conductor. Equally at home on the concert stage, Maestro Mechavich has appeared with the Orlando Philharmonic, Hartford Symphony, Naples Philharmonic and Virginia Symphony. Next season he will debut with Washington National Opera conducting *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. A native of Long Lake, Minnesota, Joseph Mechavich studied at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music and Yale University School of Music.



Nick Olcott, Stage Director

Nick Olcott, our Stage Director for *Il matrimonio segreto*, is a faculty member of Maryland Opera Studio, the graduate conservatory program at the University of Maryland, where he has directed numerous operas. Regional opera credits include Donizetti’s *The Daughter of the Regiment* (Boston Lyric Opera), Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette* (Opera Cleveland), and a Mozart/Donizetti double bill, *The Impresario/Viva la mamma!* (Wolf Trap Opera). He lives in the Washington, D.C. region, where he is Resident Director at Theatre J and a member of the Artists’ Roundtable at the Round House Theatre. He has directed productions for young audiences at the Kennedy Center Family Theatre, and numerous radio productions, some of them co-productions with the Smithsonian Institution or Voice of America.

| 2009 Season Events <small>All events at 7:30 PM, unless otherwise noted.</small> | Dickinson Area | Keweenaw Area | Marquette Area | Other Locations |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Keweenaw Kickoff Gala | | June 10 (6:30 PM) | | |
| Chippewa Club Gala | June 11 (5 PM) | | | |
| Cole Porter Revue | June 14 (3 PM) | June 19 | June 15 | June 17 Escanaba |
| Christina Harmon Organ Recital | June 17 | June 21 | June 19 | |
| Bergonzi String Quartet | June 22 | June 27 | June 24 | June 25 Land O' Lakes |
| RCM Master Class with Bergonzi | | June 28 (3 PM) | | |
| Resident Chamber Musicians | June 30 | July 5 (3 PM) | July 3 | June 29 - Minocqua July 2 - Munising July 9 - Ontonagon |
| Stas & Misha | July 2 | June 30 | July 1 | |
| Jazz in the Concert Hall | July 6 | July 7 | July 8 | |
| <i>The Secret Marriage</i> | July 8 | July 12 (3 PM) | July 10 | |

Tickets go on sale May 1

Call the Rozsa Center Box Office toll free **877-746-3999** or visit **www.pmmf.org**

Ticket brochures will be mailed in April.

Government Grants

Government grants represent only a small part of the Festival's overall funding, but they can make a difference to the success and scope of certain programs.

The most recent grant from the National Endowment for the Arts was \$10,000 to help our 2007 season. We are preparing a new grant application.

The most recent grant from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs was \$10,900 to help our 2008 season. We expect to prepare a grant application for 2010, although at this writing the statewide budget pool for MCACA is in doubt.

We recently received a \$900 grant from the Copper Country Community Arts Council, a program of the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, which is to help underwrite our OPERAtion Imagination program this year.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of these government entities.

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Ask Not What the Festival Can Do for You...

—Peter Van Pelt, Chair, Management Committee

This wonderful Festival, what *The Detroit Free Press* called “a miracle of ambition, idiosyncrasy and geography” (July 4, 2004), absolutely would not exist without the support of hundreds of individual donors, our “Friends.” Your donations are the single biggest source of income for the Festival.

Our 2009 budget calls for \$176,000 in Friends donations to support a well-planned and economical season. So far we have received \$31,000, plus pledges for another \$35,000. More than ever before, we count on the generosity of our Friends. In the face of an acute economic recession, we must work together to uphold the Festival.

“There is a direct connection between Friends giving and the health of the Festival.”

In the past four years the Festival balanced its books the two years when Friends giving was high, but suffered deficits and faced a perilous future the two years when Friends giving was lower. There is a direct connection between Friends giving and the health of the Festival.

The way we get there is by widespread participation. You may remember our appeal in 2006 for “\$19.20” from everyone. Feel free to send whatever size gift is comfortable for you. Every gift, regardless of size, is appreciated.

A few years ago we received a letter from a young woman of 18 who lived in Calumet. Here’s part of what she wrote:

“My mother took me to see the opera, and I was never the same again.... Once the first note hit my ears I forgot everything else. The opera was funny, beautiful and interesting.... I couldn’t believe that something this sophisticated was taking place in my county.... If not for the PMMF, I would not be the person I am today.... I believe that the PMMF changes everyone who goes to even one event.”

Or to put it another way, it is remarkable that a generation of young people in the Upper Peninsula is growing up thinking it is normal to have professional-level classical music and opera in their small communities. Please help us sustain this unusual initiative that does so much for our quality of life.

Please use the remittance slip below to send in your check or credit card payment. We need your support to pay for the season that is fast approaching, and we all need to express our collective will for the health of our arts organizations.

Thank you!

Support Pine Mountain Music Festival

To: Pine Mountain Music Festival
PO Box 406, Hancock MI 49930

Date _____

Enclosed is my/our donation of \$ _____

Check

VISA or M/C # _____ Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

I/We pledge to pay \$ _____ in _____ equal installments starting _____ (must conclude by 9/30/09).

My/Our name(s) _____

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Galas to Launch Season

Festival patrons have a special treat to look forward to – two gala benefit events to open our 2009 season.

The featured entertainment at both galas will be the six Resident Opera Artists, performing with piano accompaniment – a good opportunity to get acquainted with the singers who later will bring us the Cole Porter Revue and will sing in the opera, *The Secret Marriage*. The galas and the revue will be hosted by Artistic Director Joshua Major and ROA Program Director Lucy Thrasher.

“The Keweenaw Kickoff Gala,” will be in Houghton in the lobby of the Rozsa Center on June 10 at 6:30 p.m. Dessert and coffee will be served, with cash bar for wine and beer. Tickets are \$45.

The second event will be the Chippewa Club Gala in Iron Mountain on June 11 beginning at 5:00 p.m. with a social hour, and will include an elegant dinner. Tickets are \$75.

These opening galas in the past have been described as fun, lively, ebullient, delightful, delicious, charming, exciting – just think of a complimentary adjective, and it applies! We hope to see you there! Tickets available from the Rozsa Center Box Office starting May 1.

Adopt a Resident Opera Artist or a Resident Chamber Music Ensemble

For several years, we have offered you the opportunity to “adopt” a Resident Opera Artist, one of our young singers. For a shared adoption at \$1,000 or a full adoption at \$3,000, you receive certain benefits and a personal friendship with your adoptee.

This year for the first time we will have a pair of Resident Chamber Music Ensembles, and we offer you the opportunity to “adopt” one of them. You can read about them on page 5. These are highly talented young players honing their skills in the demanding environment of ensemble playing, and their appearance at Pine Mountain Music Festival promises to be a highlight for them and for us. You may adopt an entire ensemble with a \$2,000 donation.

Please call the Festival office at 906-482-1542 or 888-309-7861 for details and to learn about the benefits that the adopters receive. It’s simple! Past adopters have expressed delight at getting to know the artists, and the artists tell us that the new friendships formed in this way are very meaningful for them.



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