

CALGARY opera

LITTLE WOMEN

Study Guide



LITTLE WOMEN

By Mark Adamo

Dress Rehearsal:

Thursday, January 28th, 2010

7pm at Jubilee Auditorium

Introduction

The music, the artistry, the grand emotion, the spectacle! This is the fantastic world of opera. Calgary Opera welcomes you and your students to *Little Women* by Mark Adamo.

Opera is a unique and exciting art form that combines the disciplines of music, drama, literature, dance, visual, and technical arts like no other. Calgary Opera's production of *Little Women* is the Canadian Premiere of this contemporary opera, and was adapted by Mark Adamo from the classic novel by Louisa May Alcott. Highly melodic and beautifully wrought, the arias and ensembles in this opera accentuate this emotionally charged interpretation of the much loved novel. *Little Women* is directed by Kelly Robinson and conducted by Gordon Gerrard.

This guide will give you the backstage tour of all that is opera - terminology, jobs, inside information about the composer and librettist, the history behind the opera, engaging activities and suggestions, and a link to obtain musical highlights from the opera, all of which are designed to make *Little Women* an unforgettable experience for you and your students.

In this guide you will see the many ways you can incorporate *Little Women* and the arts into your classroom. A study of the performing and fine arts helps students develop critical analysis and problem solving skills, perseverance, and a drive for excellence. The creative skills students develop through the arts carry them toward new ideas, new experiences and new challenges. Plus, there's nothing like the excitement and magic of a live professional performance!

Thank you for giving your students this special opportunity.

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Please feel free to reproduce any of these pages for use in the classroom

Preparation and follow-up before, during, and after the opera

The more students are prepared for this experience, the more they will get out of it. Knowing about the story, the life and times of the composer and the music is very important to make their opera experience a sensational one!

Before the Opera

- Teachers should review the study guide and all of the suggested activities to decide which ones students will be working on. Some of the activities should be started prior to seeing the opera. Setting students up with their activities ahead of time gives them a chance to view the opera within the context of what they will be working on after i.e. Fashion, reviewing, etiquette etc.
- The *Little Women* synopsis provides a background for teachers in familiarizing students with the story.
- Listen to the music excerpts from the opera by going to the link provided
- Read the history of the opera, composer and librettist, and familiarize your group with opera terms (all items in the guide can be reproduced).
- Familiarize students with the characters and their opera voice types (i.e. Soprano, Bbass, Tenor) so that students can identify which is which during the opera.
- Learn about the jobs surrounding an opera production (see the section entitled, *Pulling it Together.*)
- After the students have become familiar with the above, take one section per day to review. Discuss the characters and plot along with the musical selections provided on the enclosed CD.
- You may wish to assign students to write a review on the opera – a guideline for writing reviews is included in this study guide.
- You may assign some students to report on singing, characters, orchestra, costumes, scenery etc. after the dress rehearsal.
- Make sure that meeting places and times are clear at the Jubilee Auditorium.
- Review the audience expectations section.

Some teachers have found it advisable to give out assigned seat tickets at a meeting place in the hall just before a performance, as lost tickets cannot be replaced.

During the Opera: Audience Expectations

When you are seated, you may be able to see the orchestra tuning their instruments in the orchestra pit. When the house lights dim, it's time to:

- Turn off all cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices. The use of cameras or recording devices is strictly forbidden.
- Think about what makes a good audience member.
- Keep movement and voices down to a minimum as this is a live dress rehearsal performance.
- Keep food and drinks outside of the auditorium – the Jubilee Auditorium has great acoustics so every sound can be heard in the theatre.

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- Applaud when the conductor enters and bows, then again after the overture.
 - After the curtain goes down and the lights go up, the intermission (usually about 20 minutes) begins. Now is the time to talk, eat (in the lobby) and use the washroom.
 - It is permissible to applaud after an aria, or ensemble (if you liked it).
 - Be silent if the performance has to stop for a few moments (this is a performance, but also a working rehearsal so it may be necessary to stop at times).
 - If you must use the washroom during the performance, please be accompanied by an adult supervisor. The ushers will let you in again but you may have to wait until there is an appropriate break in the opera.
 - Applaud the cast as they take their bows after the performance - if you feel one person did an exceptional job, it is permissible to shout "*Bravo!*" for a man, "*Brava!*" for a woman, and "*Bravi!*" for the whole performance (most people stick to "*Bravo!*").

After-the-Opera: Student, classroom and school activities

Write a Review or Critique of the performance

- One of the best ways to encourage critical thinking of a performing arts production is to encourage students' honesty and draw out detailed opinions. A productive evaluation session - spoken, written, visual or dramatized - should follow this basic 'how to' outline below.
- On the internet, students can find many reviews of *Little Women* from other opera companies' performances to use as a guideline or example.

Guidelines for writing a review:

When writing a theatre review you must remember three main components: the acting, and singing, the technical, and the overall view.

The acting and singing are probably the most important aspect of the opera. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the opera and its characters before you go see it. Make sure you know all of the characters' names and the actors who are playing them; the study guide or the Calgary Opera website is an ideal place in which to find all this information. Ask yourself if the actors seemed to understand what they are saying or singing. Did they bring life to the music? Could you see and hear the emotion while they sang? Did they interact well with others on stage? Did any particular performer stand out to you and why? Also look to see if each actor is connecting well with his/her character. (However, keep in mind that everyone has a very unique style of acting and maybe even comment on that.) How well are they giving and taking focus? Is there any one person who sticks out in your head as "hogging" all the attention?

The second aspect to look at is the technical. This includes everything from the lights and sound to the costumes and makeup. It has been said that if the technical aspect of the performance becomes noticeable, then it was not effective. Keep in mind that the lights, sound, makeup, etc. are there to enhance the performance, not to be the main focus. (But as the reviewer, you should be looking for it.) For instance, the lights should be prospective to the time of day, the season and so on. Also, it should not cast any shadows on the actors' faces. The appeal of the music is often a matter of opinion because everyone likes different kinds of music; however, it should accent the style and format of the play. The costumes and set should portray the time period and part of each character's personality. The makeup should do the same, but keep a look out for

shadows and lines on the face. All these things are very important to the performance of the show. Again, familiarizing yourself with the opera before you go will assist with making these decisions.

The overall view of the theatre will give the reader a feel of exactly how well you enjoyed your experience at this play. Include ticket prices here and your opinion of the worthiness of that cost. Also, keep in mind the quality of the theatre and its facilities. The audience is also a major part of your theatre experience. Was the audience big? Were they perceptive and interactive? Remember, you shouldn't make this the main point, but it would be good to comment on it. This entire portion should convey your opinion and feeling of how the show went.

So in conclusion, remember the singing and acting, the technical, and the overall view, and you'll have written a successful theatre review. Oh, and one more thing: don't ever lie so as not to hurt someone's feelings. Constructive criticism will only do someone good. Keep all these things in mind when writing your review and it will be great. Have fun!

Research and Explore Contemporary Opera

- Contemporary opera is the term used for any opera written in the 2nd half of the 20th century to present day
- Create a list of contemporary operas that have become quite well known
- Find some reviews from other opera companies who have presented *Little Women*, and have students explain if they agree with the reviewer or not, or talk about how those productions compared to Calgary Opera's. See if you can find differences/similarities or compare your class review to the other reviews
- Examine the types of stories that are being used in contemporary opera

Write a libretto for your own Contemporary Opera

- After examining the types of stories that contemporary opera uses, Choose a popular story, or a story that is being studied in the classroom, and create a libretto for the whole story or just one or two chapters of the story. How can you portray the events, or emotions of a character, from those chapters, in a song? Students can be responsible for writing different sections of the libretto.
- Students can then adapt the libretto to a melody they have created or a familiar melody they know

Listen to the excerpts provided on the music link, or CD

- Identify the various operatic voices that you hear
- Discuss the emotions or ideas that are being sung about; is it clear? How does the melody support these emotions or ideas?
- When at the opera, listen for these excerpts to see how they come to life on stage
- If your class has written a libretto (as suggested above), can you set some of the songs to the selections provided?

Social Etiquette of the era

- When viewing the opera, watch for the director's staging and how he paid attention to the etiquette rules listed below
- Have an 1860's day in your classroom where everyone has to follow the etiquette rules of the time

- Create your own character from the era, with a complete character history and outline, and then 'act' your character using these ideas for their behaviour
- Students can create interactive skits with their characters, focusing on these etiquette rules
- Pictures can be drawn of their characters, and their clothes can link in to the fashions of the era as found in the next activity in this study guide

Etiquette Highlights:

During the Civil War era, there were many etiquette rules that had to be followed. It was considered rude to ignore these manners. Although most etiquette rules revolved around the dance floor, there were ones that had to be followed everywhere. Back then women were supposed to be very feminine, and men were supposed to be very manly. If you did anything that stepped out of these personas, you were considered odd and disrespectful. Sometimes when the people "back home" were in need of entertainment they threw a dance or a type of party! Listed below are just some etiquette rules that absolutely had to be followed at these functions.

- You always had to look and listen to the person whom you were speaking to, or who was speaking to you.
- You never walked away from a conversation with someone without saying "Excuse me Miss (or Mr.), or you could also say "Pardon me".
- A gentleman never shook a lady's hand in public unless she offered her hand first.
- While leaving a building or walking down a flight of stairs a gentleman should have always walked in front of the lady. This way, in the event that she falls, he would be there to break the landing. (so as not to step on her dress)
- One thing you should always remember: if you were in a conversation with a lady and she repeatedly used the word sir, she was being exceptionally distant and it was usually a sign that she did not enjoy your company. She was just being polite.

Costume Design and Fashion during the Civil War Era

- Find photos on the internet of fashion during the Civil War Era
- Using these fashion highlight facts, design your own costumes for the male and female characters in the opera.
- When watching the opera, study the costumes to see how the professional costume designer worked with the characters of *Little Women*, and use her ideas to inspire your own designs.
- If students have already created their own character as suggested in the previous activity, they should design their costume to suit this new character.
- More fashion highlights, such as the women's sportswear, can be found through further research.

Fashion Highlights:

1. The women of the day often wore a dress called a Round Dress. Women wore these from the late 1840s until the late 1850s. It has a lined and lightly boned front-closed bodice. The bodice and the skirt are attached to the waistband. The shirts under sleeve

works well with the fabric the dress is made of. This dress is printed with red and brown earth stones.

2. The chemisette was a half slip worn under women's dresses or blouses. The chemise was a similar undergarment except its full length. Pantaloons were worn under the chemise.
3. Men held up their pants with suspenders, or "braces," although many men in the West used wide leather belts. Many wore loose-fitting vests, often made of wool, which became popular both for everyday attire and dressy occasions. Professionals wore suits, which fit loosely. The coats of the suit were usually woolen, with broad shoulders and wide sleeves, and the pants were baggy. Shirts contained stiff paper or starched collars, giving them a rigid appearance, although they actually fit rather loosely.
4. White shirts were a sign of prosperity, showing that the wearer was not a "labourer."
5. In town, women and men generally wore shoes with leather soles and high, fabric tops. Shoes were either buttoned on the side, or laced up in front. Shoes for sport were introduced in the 1860s, an early version of sneakers, with laces, fabric tops and rubber soles. Shoe makers did not distinguish between left and right shoes, and there were no half-sizes or varied widths beyond "slim" and "wide." Socks and stockings were made of cotton or wool, and were generally black, brown or white. Silk stockings for women were available, but hard to acquire and expensive.
6. Facial hair was popular for men, although full beards were not prevalent outside New England. Mustachios, lamb-chop sideburns and other such styles were considered dignified, masculine and handsome. Women of fashion wore their hair long, swept back, and in a "waterfall" style, which was held behind the neck with a hairnet. Some added hairpieces, often made of horsehair, to supplement any deficiencies of length or volume.

Research the role of women during the Civil War

- During the American Civil War (1861-65), women were forced to take on new roles to support their families and care for the wounded. The roles and opportunities varied between the classes. Women of the lower class were much more vulnerable to hardship while women of the upper class were able to take part in the public sphere for the first time.
- Investigate what the new roles and responsibilities these women had were, and if it impacted women's place in society permanently
- There are many profiles of great women of this era for students to research and report about

Research the history of the novel *Little Women* and learn about Louisa May Alcott

- Some information about the novel is found in the study guide.
- You may wish to read the story as a class prior to attending the opera.

Explore Calgary Opera's interactive website to find out more about *Little Women* and Calgary Opera. There are podcasts, designs, artist bios and more at www.calgaryopera.com

Enter our contest! Calgary Opera loves receiving student written comments. Please mail us your students' pictures, reviews, or comments for use in future brochures, programs, etc. We use no student names when we quote them, and three times a year we will put your students' names in a great draw for Calgary Opera prizes; including t-shirts, posters and treats.

Mail contest entries to:

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History of the opera *Little Women*

Commissioned by the Opera Studio of Houston Grand Opera (HGO), then under the guidance of General Director David Gockley, *Little Women* was first performed on March 13, 1998 in a small scale production. The success of this first production prompted Gockley to pronounce it "destined to be an American classic" and scheduled the opera for a main stage premiere of ten performances in March 2000 — making it the first of HGO's twenty-some commissions to be so revived.

G. Schirmer published the opera in May 1998; National Public Radio broadcast the recording of the premiere the following September; and there have been more than 35 distinct productions, professional and academic, domestic and international since the world premiere, ranging from established American stages (Minnesota Opera, New York City Opera, Opera Pacific), to newer, more progressive companies (Fort Worth Opera, Opera Columbus), from American summer festivals (Glimmerglass Opera, Central City Opera, Chautauqua Opera), to international venues (Teatro de la Ciudad in Mexico City, World Expo in Tokyo and Nagoya, Japan), and to many music conservatories.

Since 2006, *Little Women* has premiered in Australia, Israel, Belgium and now Canada – presented by Calgary Opera!

Uniqueness of the opera *Little Women*

- Unlike classic opera, *Little Women* is not about passionate romantic love but about family love, relationships, and loyalties. *Little Women* stayed true to book in this manner.
- Musically, *Little Women* will “range between abstract and tonal, poetic and vernacular, song and symphonic forms”. - Mark Adamo
- *Little Women* has no chorus, which is uncommon in opera
- The lead, Jo, is a Mezzo-Soprano. It is uncommon in opera for the lead to be a Mezzo-Soprano. Most of time the lead female character is a Soprano. The most famous Mezzo-Soprano lead role is Carmen.
- The classic novel is still on the popular reading lists of today's society, more than a century after being written.

- *Little Women* is much more an ensemble opera than other contemporary or classic operas – there are few arias or solo sections.

Notes from composer Mark Adamo

“More than a century after its publication, Louisa May Alcott's chronicle of growing up female in civil-war era New England remains a main dish in the smorgasbord of American popular fiction. Readers have devoured the adventures of Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy in more than one hundred languages. In our own land and tongue, Hollywood has had to film the piece once every 20 years or so to slake the recurring appetite. The applause that hailed *Little Women* in its own century echoes in its steadily rising prestige at the close of our own; writers as diverse as Simone de Beauvoir and Joyce Carol Oates have claimed Alcott as a literary ancestor. I read the book as a child, and loved it. And I recognized that *Little Women* itself solves certain problems for the opera composer. The novel itself — part classic, part mass-culture perennial — as well as its young, lively characters in their antique locale reminded me of opera itself these days: an art buzzing with new writing and thinking while still working with resources (the bel-canto trained voice, the acoustic orchestra) that stabilized one hundred years ago. I knew Jo's wild imagination, her haunting memories, would free me musically to range between abstract and tonal, poetic and vernacular, song and symphonic forms. The conflict of *Little Women* is Jo versus the passage of time. Realize this about Jo: alone among adolescent protagonists in classic American fiction (Tom Sawyer, Holden Caulfield, and Portnoy), she's happy where she is. Adored by her family, she adores them in turn. Not so poor as to starve, Jo is just poor enough to see in each small windfall gold to delight a Midas. Jo knows adulthood will only graduate her from her perfect home. She fights her own and her sisters' growth because she knows deep down that growing up means growing apart. “

- Mark Adamo

Biography of Mark Adamo

Mark Adamo's most recent premiere is *Four Angels: Concerto for Harp and Orchestra*, introduced by the National Symphony Orchestra in June of 2007. His second opera, *Lysistrata, or the Nude Goddess*, after Aristophanes, made its East Coast debut in March 2006 at New York City Opera, at which Mark completed his fifth year as composer-in-residence in March 2006. *Lysistrata* was commissioned and introduced by Houston Grand Opera for its fiftieth-anniversary season in March 2005. Since its 1998 premiere, also by Houston Grand Opera, *Little Women*, the first opera for which he composed both music and libretto, has been nationally telecast on the PBS series *Great Performances*, released on CD by Ondine Records, and heard in over sixty national and international engagements from New York to Mexico City, Minneapolis, Adelaide, Tel Aviv, and Tokyo: including two for which he served as stage director.

Choral works include *Cantate Domino*, commissioned by the Choral Arts Society of Washington and introduced at the Kennedy Center in 2000; *Garland*, for Francisco Nuñez and the Young People's Chorus of New York, introduced in 2006; and *Supreme Virtue*, recorded by Seattle's Esoterics and released in spring 2008. In October 2007 Eclipse Chamber Orchestra completed a recording of Adamo's orchestral works for Naxos, including the first recordings of his *Late Victorians*, his symphonic cantata for singing voice, speaking voice, and chamber orchestra; *Alcott Music*, from *Little Women*, for strings, harp, celesta, and percussion; *Regina Coeli*, for harp and strings; and the *Overture to Lysistrata*.



Mark lives in Manhattan and in Kent Cliffs, New York: his music is published by Fluent Music and by G. Schirmer.

History of the Novel *Little Women*

Little Women (or *Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy*) is a novel by American author Louisa May Alcott (1832–1888). Written and set in the Alcott family home, Orchard House, in Concord, Massachusetts, it was published in two parts in 1868 and 1869. The novel follows the lives of four sisters—Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy March—and is loosely based on the author's childhood experiences with her three sisters. The first part of the book was an immediate commercial and critical success and prompted the composition of the book's second part, also a huge success. Both parts were first published as a single volume in 1880. Alcott followed *Little Women* with two sequels reprising the March sisters, *Little Men* (1871) and *Jo's Boys* (1886). *Little Women* has been adapted to play, musical, opera, film, and animated feature.

Brief Synopsis of *Little Women*

Little Women is a coming-of-age story about the young March family sisters — Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy, with Jo at its heart. The opera begins with a view of the past, when life for Jo was simple and she and her sisters were close. Much to her dismay, life becomes complicated. Meg, the eldest, marries. Younger sister Beth grows ill. Fearful of putting love or her own ambitions before her devotion to her sisters, Jo pushes away two would-be suitors, driving one into the arms of her youngest sister, Amy, and soon finds herself alone. Realizing that nothing she does can stop the world from changing, Jo begins to accept that she must let go of the past, celebrate her loved ones for what and who they were, and release them to what they are now.

The Characters of *Little Women*

JO: Mezzo-Soprano
LAURIE: Tenor
AMY: Soprano
BETH: Soprano
MEG: Mezzo-Soprano
ALMA March: Mezzo -Soprano
JOHN BROOKE: Baritone
Additional Character Singers

Musical Highlights of *Little Women*

ACT ONE

Aria: "**Perfect as we are**" sung by Jo [low lyric Mezzo-Soprano]
CD Disc 1 Track 9

Aria: "**There was a knight, once...**" sung by John Brooke [Lyric Baritone]
CD Disc 1 Track 11

Aria: "**Things change, Jo**" sung by Meg [lyric Mezzo-Soprano]
CD Disc 1 Track 17

This is the most famous aria in the opera and stands apart as an independent piece of music that is essential to understanding and representing this principal character of Jo.

Duet: **"We stand together on this new/old day,..."** sung by Alma March [mezzo-soprano] and Gideon [Bass-Baritone] [two of the older characters] as the wedding vows for the young couple, Meg and Brooke at their wedding.

CD Disc 1 Track 20

ACT TWO

Ensemble: **"Laurie, I'm in England:"** Amy writes to the other sisters and the family and friends who respond with their own messages and urge each other to "Write soon...".

CD Disc 2 Track 2

Aria: **"Do You Know the Land"** Friedrich Bhaer [Bass-baritone], a young scholar, courts Jo by singing her in English translation the famous poem "Kennst du das Land?" by the renowned German poet Goethe.

CD Disc 2 Track 5

Aria: **"Have peace, Jo"** Terminally ill, Beth [lyric soprano] urges her sister Jo to accept her coming death.

CD Disc 2 Track 8

Aria and Final Quartet: **"Let me look at you"** Jo calls on her memories of the sisters of her girlhood and, ghost-like, they materialize.

In forgiveness and gratitude, she celebrates what they were and releases them to what they are now:

they join in harmony a final time before disappearing.

CD Disc 2 Track 15

"On to tomorrow, Each to her separate goal. Still, for a moment - Remember the moment, We were four sisters, One soul."

Full Synopsis of *Little Women*

Setting: Massachusetts during the Civil War

Prologue

The dark attic of the March house.

Jo, distraught, greets her friend Laurie. He's just married Jo's younger sister Amy; but has he only married Amy to stay near Jo? Worse: Laurie adores Amy — nothing is as it was — and the opera spirals back in time to show why Jo tried to keep it so.

Act I, Scene 1

The attic, two years ago.

Jo and her sisters Meg, Beth, and Amy make games of their chores. Laurie tauntingly tells Jo that his tutor, John Brooke, keeps Meg's glove because he loves her. Jo, alone, sketching a story, fearfully denies that Meg might love him too.

Act I, Scene 2

In front of the March house, weeks later.

Brooke courts Meg. Jo urges the family to reject him. Cecilia, the girls' aunt also scorns Brooke: but Meg, resolved, accepts him. Her family celebrates, but Jo accuses Meg of abandoning her.

Act I, Scene 3

The March garden, the following summer.

Meg and Brooke adapt their parent's wedding vows. A feverish Laurie pleads for Jo's love. She spurns him; stung, he flees. Beth, secretly ill, collapses as Meg cries for help.

Act II, Scene 1

The offices of the Daily Volcano, a New York City fiction tabloid, one year later.

A triumphant Jo sells a story; back at her boarding house, she writes her increasingly atomized family. A new acquaintance, Fredrich Bhaer, invites her to the opera.

Act II, Scene 2

Simultaneously, Jo's boarding house; the March parlor; sunny Oxford lawn.

Jo and Bhaer engage in flirtatious debate while, in Oxford, Amy tests Laurie's feelings for Jo. Beth rages at the piano. Bhaer ardently recites Goethe to Jo, when Alma's desperate telegram interrupts them. Jo flees to Concord.

Act II, Scene 3

Beth's bedroom, three sleepless nights later.

Beth dozes as her family keeps vigil. Jo bursts in; Beth bids her family leave. Beth urges Jo to accept her impending death.

Act II, Scene 4

Before the March house, the following spring.

Cecilia baits Jo with Amy's letter about loving Laurie. Jo wearily admits Bhaer may have abandoned her. Cecilia urges Jo to choose solitude; refusing, Jo retreats to the attic.

Act II, Scene 5

The attic.

As in the beginning, Jo, distraught. Laurie, appearing, again reminisces; but now Jo rejects the past. Her sisters materialize as memories: Jo, in emotional exorcism, celebrates and releases them. Bhaer — her future — appears: Jo extends her hand to him.

The Company



Gordon Gerrard
Conductor

A graduate of the respected vocal accompanying program at Manhattan School of Music, Gordon Gerrard has served as a conductor for Opera NUOVA (Edmonton) since 2001 and now as Resident Conductor and Repetiteur for Calgary Opera. Conducting credits include the European Music Academy in the Czech Republic, and assistant conductor for Opera Lyra Ottawa. Mr. Gerrard has held the positions of repetiteur for Vancouver Opera, Associate Music Director and Chorus Master of the Manhattan School of Music Undergraduate Opera Studio. While at Calgary Opera, Maestro Gerrard has conducted *Le Portrait de Manon*, *La Divina*, *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, and *Beatrice and Benedict*.



Kelly Robinson
Stage Director

Kelly Robinson is a director and choreographer whose career spans opera, theatre, film and television. He has directed critically acclaimed productions of *Die Zauberflöte* and *La Bohème* and new productions of works ranging from *Les Pecheurs de Perles* to Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*. Mr. Robinson's work has been seen at the National Arts Centre, Canadian Stage Company (Toronto), Vineyard Theater (New York) and Eugene O'Neill Theater Centre. Currently Director of the Opera as Theatre Program and Theatre Arts at The Banff Centre, he looks forward to the world premiere of *Lillian Alling* for Vancouver Opera. Mr. Robinson's last directorial assignment at Calgary Opera was *Ariadne auf Naxos*.



Mariateresa Magisano (Soprano)
Beth

Mariateresa Magisano recently sang Micaela in *Carmen* with Vancouver Opera and Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Opera Lyra Ottawa. Career highlights include: Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with the New York City Opera; Despina in *Così fan tutte* with Arizona Opera; Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Opera Lyra Ottawa, Buffalo Philharmonic, Aspen Opera Theater and Opera Saskatchewan. Mariateresa also has sung with Opera Columbus, Des Moines Metro Opera, Edmonton Opera, the Asolo Musica Festival and the Teatro Rendano. In 2010 Mariateresa will sing Liù in *Turandot* with Opera Lyra, Ottawa.



Catherine May, (Soprano)
Amy

Catherine May was trained in Canada before completing her studies in the UK. Recent performances: Olympia/Antonia/Giulietta for MidWales Opera, Cunegonde (cover) and Pretty Polly (cover) for English National Opera, Queen of the Night *The Magic Flute* (English Touring Opera), Zerbinetta *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Britten-Pears Young Artists Programme), Mimi *La Bohème* (British Youth Opera, Scottish Opera on Tour), Blonde *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Diva Opera). Concert performances include *Carmina Burana* (Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra), Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* at the Aldeburgh Festival, and Poulenc's *Gloria* and Jenkins' *The Armed Man* (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.) Ms. May last sang Naiad in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Calgary Opera.



Allyson McHardy, (Mezzo-Soprano)
Jo

Mezzo-soprano Allyson McHardy is "a singer of enormous imagination and versatility" to quote the San Francisco Chronicle. An alumna of the prestigious Merola Program, she has sung Rosina (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) and Olga (*Eugene Onegin*) for the San Francisco Opera, Isabella (*Italiana in Algieri*) for Lille, Caens, and Amiens, and Phedre (*Hippolyte et Aricie*) for Opéra de Toulouse. In concert she has appeared at Rome's Santa Cecilia, Chicago's Grant Park Festival, and in Messiah with Lopez-Cobos in Madrid. She looks forward to Adalgisa (*Norma*) in Warsaw, the title role in *Cenerentola* for Glyndebourne and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* (Winnipeg Symphony).



Kriztina Szabo (Mezzo-Soprano)
Meg

Canadian Mezzo-Soprano Kriztina Szabó has become a highly sought-after artist in both North America and Europe. The Chicago Tribune recently exclaimed, "Kriztina Szabó stole every scene with her powerful, mahogany voice and deeply poignant immersion in the empress' plight," for her performance of Ottavia in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. She made her Lincoln Center debut as Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* where she was praised in the New York Times as "clear, strong, stately and an endearingly vulnerable Dorabella." Most recently she performed Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Stadttheater and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* with Chicago Opera Theater, and Roelina in *Barber of Seville* with Calgary Opera.



Elizabeth Turnbull (Mezzo-Soprano)
Alma March

A winner in the Metropolitan Opera Competition, Alberta-born mezzo soprano Elizabeth Turnbull has been featured with Chicago Opera Theater, Toronto Symphony, Dallas Opera, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Manitoba Opera, Vancouver Symphony, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Winnipeg Symphony and San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque. She performed the role of Maria Picariello in Calgary Opera's world premiere of *Filumena* and also at the Banff Summer Arts Festival, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, and for Edmonton Opera. She last appeared with Calgary Opera as Queen Elizabeth in the world premiere of *Frobisher* and looks forward to Emilia in *Otello* for the Dallas and Edmonton Opera. For Calgary Opera, she last performed in *Frobisher* (2007).



Kimberly Barber (Mezzo-soprano)
Cecilia March

Canadian mezzo-soprano Kimberly Barber began her career as a member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble, then shifted her sights to Europe, beginning at Opera de Marseille and the Frankfurt Opera -company member 1989-1994. She has performed with such companies as Opera Zuid in Holland, Paris Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York City Opera and Seattle Opera. Assistant Professor of Voice at Wilfrid Laurier University, she appeared as Ottavia in Opera Atelier's *Coronation of Poppea* and the title role in *Regina* for Pacific Opera Victoria. Ms. Barber most recently appeared with Calgary Opera as Jessica in *Frobisher* in 2007.



Colin Ainsworth (Tenor)
Laurie

Canadian tenor Colin Ainsworth has distinguished himself with exceptional singing, impeccable diction and a diverse range of repertoire. He has performed around the world with such opera companies as the Royal Opera House, Greek National Opera, Vancouver Opera, Edmonton Opera, Opera Atelier, the Edinburgh Festival, Opéra Français de New York, Pacific Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, and Manitoba Opera in such roles as Tonio (*La Fille du Régiment*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), and Nadir (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*). He has also been featured on seven CD recordings, one live opera DVD and been twice nominated for a Dora Award and a Juno.



Phillip Addis (Baritone)
John Brooke

For the 2009-10 season, Phillip Addis appears as Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore* with Atlanta Opera, the Count in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opera Atelier in Toronto, John Brooke in *Little Women* with Calgary Opera, as well as the title role in *Pelleas et Mélisande* at the Opéra Comique. Last season Mr. Addis appeared as Marcello in a new production of *La bohème* with the Theater Basel in Switzerland, and Zurga in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* with Opéra de Montréal. Additionally, Mr. Addis sang the Count in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Florida Grand Opera and a recital tour in his native Canada.



Daniel Okulitch (Baritone)
Friedrich Bhaer

Mr. Okulitch's most recent engagement includes the title role in the world premiere of *The Fly* at the Opéra du Châtelet in Paris in a co-production with the LA Opera, where he reprised the role in the fall of 2008-2009. Also in 2008-09 he debuted Teatro alla Scala as Theseus in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro* for the Dallas Opera, Escamillo in *Carmen* in Vancouver, Swallow in *Peter Grimes* for his debut at the Washington National Opera, and the title role of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* in Ft. Worth.



Terry Hodges (Bass-Baritone)
Gideon March/Mr. Dashwood

Bass baritone Terry Hodges enjoys a busy career in opera and music theatre in the United States and Canada with credits at Santa Fe Opera, Lake George Opera Festival, Carnegie Hall, Boston Lyric Opera and the Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Recent and upcoming engagements include, La Roche in *Capriccio* for Pacific Opera Victoria, Dick Deadeye in *HMS Pinafore* for Nashville Opera, Benoit/Alcindoro in *La Boheme* for Vancouver Opera, Dulcamara in *L'Elisir d'Amore* for Tulsa Opera and Frank in *Die Fledermaus* for Manitoba Opera. He also has more than 2,000 performances of *Phantom of the Opera* among his list of credits.

OPERA TERMS

The word 'opera' is Italian, derived from the plural of the Latin *opus*, meaning 'work.' Opera, in Italian is called *opera lirica*, or lyric work. 'Lyric' is defined as 'appropriate song,' so *opera lirica* is a work of theatre that is set to song. Opera combines the best of all worlds: singing, orchestra, drama, dance, sets, costumes, lighting and special effects. All of these characteristics combine to make opera one of the most powerful art forms. Opera is just as entertaining now as it was when it was first created. If you like a good story, you'll like opera. Here are a few things to help you figure it all out.

Libretto: Italian for "little book"; the words of an opera written by a librettist.

Aria: Italian for an air or song; the big number where the singer expresses feelings and shows off the voice.

Recitative: Speech-singing where the singer may adopt the rhythms of ordinary speech. Used to further the plot or set up an aria. It could be considered a forerunner of rap music.

Duet: An aria built for two. Singers express feelings to each other or the audience. One of the most notable duets is between Gideon and Alma March.

Ensemble: Principal singers singing mostly together, expressing similar or different opinions and emotions. There are many ensemble pieces in *Little Women*.

Fach or Voice Category: German for "compartment." A voice category or range of notes and voice quality in individual singers.

Coloratura Soprano: The highest female voice. This soprano is the 'tweety bird' of opera, singing the highest range of notes with great flexibility. There are no coloratura soprano roles in *Little Women*.

Soprano: The voice has a high range of notes. Voice quality can be dramatic or lyric. The roles of Amy and Beth are soprano roles.

Mezzo-Soprano: Mezzo-Sopranos have the middle range of the female voice. The roles of Jo and Meg are Mezzo-Soprano roles.

Tenor: The highest range in the male voice. For example, the role of Laurie, in *Little Women*.

Baritone: The middle range of the male voice. John Brooke and Friedrich Bhaer are baritone roles.

Bass: The lowest of the male voices.

Chorus: A group of community-based singers who provide support to the principal singers, set the scene and create the mood for an opera. The chorus includes all voice categories.

Pulling it Together

It takes a lot of people to produce an opera! An opera production not only involves soloists, chorus and orchestra, but many other people involved in planning, working behind the scenes, in the auditorium and marketing the performance. Here are some of the jobs with brief descriptions.

Conductor:	Directs all music rehearsals; conducts performances
Chorus Master:	Prepares the chorus for performance
Chorus:	Community members - auditioned every year
Rehearsal Pianist:	Plays for all rehearsals
Stage Director:	Moves all performers on stage; works with characterization
Production Manager:	In charge of all aspects of technical production
Head Make-Up Artist:	Responsible for applying make up for all performers
Costume Designer:	Design, and make costumes for all performers
Dressers:	Fit and alter costumes for performers
Stage Manager:	In charge of rehearsal operations and calls cues for cast and crew during the performance.
Ass't Stage Manger:	Assists stage manager with specific responsibilities
Set Designer:	Draws a design for the set, scenery and props
Stage Crew:	Moves scenery and stage props
Lighting Designer:	Devises a lighting plan, set by electrician
Electrician:	Responsible for setting stage lights and electrical installations
Title Operator:	Operates computer for English translations projected above the stage
Property Master:	Works with set designer/director on props; keeps them safe
Front of House Mgr:	In charge of auditorium seating, lobby, ushers
Marketing Director:	Responsible for marketing the opera to the public
Development Director:	Responsible for acquiring opera donors
Education Director:	Designs Education programs for the community, for schools, study guides
Volunteer Director:	Responsible for recruiting, assigning and recognizing volunteers
Web designer:	Design the opera web site
Opera program:	Requires layout designers, writers etc.
Executive Ass't:	Assists the General Director
General Director:	Responsible for all aspects of managing an opera company
Publicist:	Responsible for coordinating newspaper, TV and radio stories