Stony Brook Opera
2011 - 2012 Season

A Letter from the Stony Brook Opera Artistic Director

We are pleased to announce our 2011-2012 season, which will again include three productions: a program of scenes, semi-staged with piano accompaniment in the Fall, a chamber opera in February, and a full production in April.

For the Fall scenes program, we will present “Trouble in Tahiti/Paradise in New York,” a program of scenes from opera and musical theatre works by Leonard Bernstein. We are thrilled to announce that the composer's daughter Jamie Bernstein will make her directorial debut staging and narrating this program (see Jamie’s bio and my interview with her on pp. 4-5 of this issue). Timothy Long will conduct the show.

In February, Stony Brook Opera will collaborate with members of the Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra in a production of La tragédie de Carmen, Peter Brook's brilliant adaptation of Bizet's ever-popular Carmen. In their adaptation, Jean-Claude Carrière and Peter Brook stripped the action down to its bare essentials, focusing completely on the four principal characters Carmen, Micaëla, Don José and Escamillo, and drawing extensively on Prosper Mérimée’s original novella for the spoken dialogue. French composer Marius Constant reduced the orchestra to a chamber ensemble of 15 players. This gripping, 90-minute work was an enormous success in Paris, and later on Broadway. Timothy Long will conduct, and Joachim Schamberger will return as stage director.

In April our full production will be a popular standard repertory opera: Mozart's delightful Singspiel Die Entführung aus dem Serail (The Abduction from the Seraglio). This audience favorite, which premiered in Vienna, 1782, was Mozart’s most important German Opera before The Magic Flute, and a milestone in the history of the Singspiel genre. We will perform the musical numbers in German, with projected titles in English. The dialogues that connect the musical numbers will be spoken in English. Leigh Holman, from the University of Colorado, makes her Stony Brook Opera debut as stage director, as does Peter Dean Beck, who will design the sets and lighting for the production. I will conduct the cast and members of the Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra.

For the dates, times and locations of all our performances this season, see the Dateline column at the end of this Newsletter. We are very excited about this year's repertoire, and we look forward to seeing you at our performances.

Sincerely,
David Lawton
“Trouble in Tahiti/Paradise in New York”
Leonard Bernstein’s Troubale in Tahiti,
and scenes from his West Side Story, On the Town,
and Wonderful Town

Our first program this season is Leonard Bernstein’s one-act opera Trouble in Tahiti, as well as a group of scenes from three of his most popular New York Broadway shows: West Side Story, On the Town, and Wonderful Town. There will be two performances at different locations: Saturday, November 19, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. at the Southampton Cultural Center, and Tuesday, November 22 at 8 p.m. at the Recital Hall, Stony Brook. There is no admission charge for the Stony Brook performance, but we welcome donations at the door. The composer’s daughter Jamie Bernstein will stage and narrate this program.

Synopsis of Trouble in Tahiti

A jazz vocal trio appears to set the scene of a little white house in Suburbia, the occupants of which are Sam and Dinah, a couple married for 10 years who seem to have lost the ability to communicate effectively. Breakfast is a tense ritual, with Dinah accusing Sam of having an interest in his secretary, a charge he angrily denies. Matters worsen when Sam refuses to come see their son in his school play, as he wishes to go to the gym and participate in an important handball tournament. Sam goes to work, where he gets tremendous satisfaction from his handling of business affairs, and Dinah visits her analyst, to whom she reveals a dream about a beautiful garden gone to seed and a yearning for "a quiet place," a place she was once sure she and Sam would find together. Sam, in the meantime, is reminded by his secretary of a pass he once made at her, and he is discomforted by this. Leaving her session, Dinah runs into Sam on the street, but they each pretend they have other engagements to avoid spending time with each other. Dinah attends a film, Trouble in Tahiti, a torrid South Seas romance which she initially derides, but which clearly has affected her. Sam wins his handball tournament, but his joy turns to sorrow when he pictures the argument he is bound to have with Dinah. The two have a halting conversation which leads nowhere, and Dinah admits she too missed their son’s play. Depressed and unable to confront their problems, they go to see the film Dinah viewed that afternoon, looking for fulfillment onscreen that they cannot find in their own lives.---Craig Butler

The second half of the program will include “New York, New York,” “Lonely Town,” “the Taxi Number,” and “I can cook too” from On the Town; “Conversation Piece, “A Little Bit in Love,” “Story of My Life,” and “It’s Love” from Wonderful Town; and “Something’s Coming,” “Balcony/Tonight,” and “One Hand, One Heart” from West Side Story.
Meet Jamie Bernstein

Jamie Bernstein is a narrator, writer and broadcaster who has transformed a lifetime of loving music into a career of sharing her knowledge and excitement with others.

Jamie grew up in an atmosphere bursting with music, theatre and literature. Her father, composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein, together with her mother, the pianist and actress Felicia Montealegre, created a spontaneous, ebullient household that turned Jamie into a lifelong cultural enthusiast.

Replicating her father’s compulsion to share and teach, Jamie has devised several ways of communicating her own excitement about classical music. In addition to “The Bernstein Beat,” a family concert about her father modeled after his own groundbreaking Young People’s Concerts, Jamie has also written and narrated concerts about Mozart and Aaron Copland, among others.

Jamie travels the world as a concert narrator, appearing everywhere from Beijing to Caracas to Vancouver. In addition to her own scripted narrations, Jamie also performs standard concert narrations, such as Walton’s “Facade,” Copland’s “A Lincoln Portrait” and her father’s Symphony No. 3, “Kaddish.” She is a frequent speaker on musical topics, including in-depth discussions of her father’s works.

In her role as a broadcaster, Jamie has produced and hosted numerous shows for radio stations in the United States as well as for BBC Radio 3 in Great Britain. In addition to hosting several seasons of the New York Philharmonic’s live national radio broadcasts, Jamie has presented various series for New York’s classical station, 96.3 WQXR FM, including annual live broadcasts from Tanglewood.

In addition to writing her own scripts and narrations, Jamie writes articles and poetry, which have appeared in such publications as Symphony, DoubleTake, Town & Country and Gourmet.

Jamie is a devoted mom to her two children, Francisca and Evan. She is an avid scrabble and tennis player, and makes an annual pilgrimage to the Utah desert to recharge her spiritual battery. --Copyright by Jamie Bernstein, all rights reserved.

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Meet Jamie Bernstein

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Jamie and I had a chance for a brief interview after her first staging rehearsal at Stony Brook

David Lawton: Jamie, I was thrilled to learn from my colleague Tim Long that you were interested in directing our Fall scenes program. He told me that you and he were collaborating on a project in Oregon. How did you meet him, and what was the project?

Jamie Bernstein: Tim came on board to music direct "We Are Women: A Bernstein Cabaret," an evening of assorted Bernstein songs strung together with a narration that tells, in a semi-abstract way, a new story about two women, a mother and later her daughter, and how they navigate the men in their lives. We presented the evening -- with four singers, bass, clarinet, and Tim brilliantly holding it all together from the piano -- at the Oregon Bach Festival last July, and we had a wonderful time. Because Tim and the singers were so busy working on stage, it fell to me, the less-occupied narrator, to run out into the house and think about the staging. When I told Tim I was thoroughly enjoying that aspect of the work, he invited me to direct my father's chamber opera, "Trouble in Tahiti," with his students at Stony Brook this fall. I could not, and still cannot, believe my good fortune.

DL: The background information that you were giving our young singers about Trouble in Tahiti in rehearsal this week was fascinating. I was astonished to learn that your father composed this work—which is such a devastating portrait of a failed marriage—during his honeymoon! You also mentioned that the two main characters were inspired by your grandparents. Would you mind sharing some of this background with our readers?

JB: Yes it’s true: Leonard Bernstein wrote "Trouble in Tahiti," that bleakest of marital portraits, during his honeymoon with my mother, Felicia Montealegre -- although he had begun work on the opera the year before. It's also true that originally, my father was going to call his operatic couple Sam and Jenny -- the names of his own parents. In the end he changed the wife's name to Dinah -- which was the name of his paternal grandmother. I wish I could say I have some information about how my father's parents reacted to seeing characters so close to themselves portrayed so negatively, but I've never heard anything about it.

DL: Since we are not performing Trouble in Tahiti complete, you and Tim came up with the intriguing idea of pairing scenes from this work with popular numbers from three of your father's most famous New York shows: West Side Story, On the Town, and Wonderful Town. Tim tells me that you plan to narrate the program in order to create an overall shape to the whole program and to provide a sense of continuity between its components. How did you and Tim arrive at the particular selections you have chosen for the program, and what are some of the themes that you intend to emphasize in your narration?

JB: Actually, we are performing T in T complete. But the work is only 40-45 minutes long, so the question always arises, when it is performed, of what it should be paired up with. This time, Tim and I decided to cook up a second half ourselves. Whereas the opera concentrates on a marriage in difficulty, our second half focuses on songs about the kinds of romantic situations more likely to occur before marriage -- and we decided to select them from the three Broadway shows LB wrote that take place in New York City. Hence the title of the evening: "Trouble in Tahiti/Paradise in New York."

DL: Tim tells me that this project marks your debut as a stage director. You have been around music and theatre all your life, however, and your own professional work has given you many of the tools director needs. What are the particular challenges of directing a program of this sort for you? Are you enjoying working with our young singers?

JB: Could there be a more magnificent on-the-job-training opportunity? -- and with such wonderful students! It’s true that I’ve never been an "official" director -- unless you count that scene from "King Lear" I directed for my 12th grade English class -- but it certainly helps that I know "Trouble in Tahiti" like the back of my hand. I guess you could say I’ve been directing this opera in my head all my life! ■
I. “Trouble in Tahiti/Paradise in New York”:  

*Scenes from opera and musical theatre works by Leonard Bernstein*  
(Two performances)  
- Saturday, November 19, 2011 at 7 p.m., Southampton Cultural Center  
- Tuesday, November 22, 2012 at 8 p.m.: Recital Hall, Stony Brook University

II. *Le tragédie de Carmen*  
(Three performances)  
- Wednesday, February 15, 2012 at noon, preview performance, Brookhaven National Laboratory  
- Thursday, February 16, 2012 at 7 p.m., Southampton Cultural Center  
- Saturday, February 18, 2012 at 8 p.m., Staller Center Main Stage

III. Full Production of Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*)  
(Three performances)  
- Wednesday, April 11, 2012 at 12 noon: preview performance, Brookhaven National Laboratory  
- Friday, April 13, 2012 at 8 pm: Stony Brook University, Staller Center Main Stage  
- Sunday, April 15, 2012 at 2 pm: Staller Center Main Stage

Save the dates!
We greatly appreciate your continued interest in the Long Island Opera Guild and we hope you enjoy our newsletters! This year Amanda Sherlip returns as our Managing Creative Editor.

Ms. Sherlip is a senior at Stony Brook University; she is pursuing her degree in music and studying the violin with Dr. Joanna Kaczarowska. As a violinist, Ms. Sherlip has travelled across the globe touring through places such as Australia, South America, East Asia and the Polynesian Islands and has studied at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. As a teacher she has a studio of over 25 string students.

Ms. Sherlip is a native New Yorker and the daughter of a Stony Brook alumna. Ms. Sherlip plans to continue a career in the arts; she is involved in a variety of organizations and committees devoted to promoting

...and as always: Stay tuned for our next two issues coming in 2012!