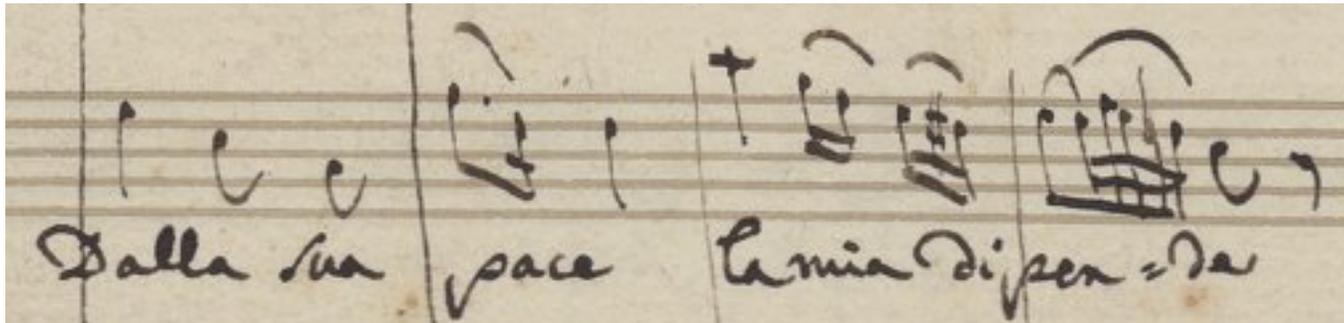
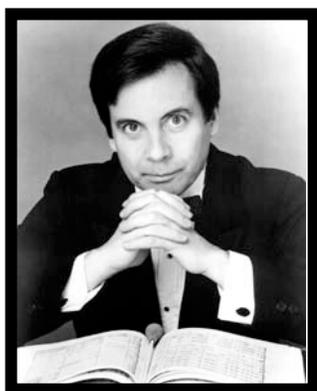


L O N G I S L A N D
O P E R A G U I L D
N E W S L E T T E R



April 2018



Stony Brook Opera 2017-2018 Season

A letter from the Artistic Director of Stony Brook Opera

This will be the last *Newsletter* that I will write and edit, for at the end of the current academic year, I'm

retiring after 49 years of teaching, conducting, and doing all kinds of administration at Stony Brook. Running the opera program all these years has been particularly rewarding to me. The program began in the Spring of 1970 as a collaboration between the Departments of Music and Theater Arts. For the first several years we produced our operas in the tiny Calderone Theater on South campus, where the Theater Arts Department was housed. Generally the number of performers exceeded the number of audience members in this very small space. As time went on, our two departments went our separate ways, and after the Staller Center was constructed, we entered into a partnership with the Staller Center, which has lasted until today. Beginning with our next season, Brenda Harris, who is directing our *Fledermaus*, will assume my duties as Artistic Director of Stony Brook Opera. She is excited to take over, and has great ideas for the future.

This last issue of our current season is devoted to Johann Strauss Junior's popular operetta *Die Fledermaus*, and includes an article about the work by Ryan Minor, Associate Professor of Music in the Department of Music (see pp. 2-3), the Metropolitan

opera synopsis of the opera (pp. 3-4), an interview with Brenda Harris and our projections and lighting designer Joey Moro (pp. 4-6), and an introduction to our three guest singers for this production (pp. 7-8): soprano Julia Radosz (Rosalinda), tenor Christopher Reames (Falke), and tenor Chad Kranak (Frosch, and choral tenor parts). Julia makes her Stony Brook debut, but Chris is an alum whom we are bringing back, and Chad appeared as Normanno in our 2014 production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

We were all heartened by the full houses and enthusiastic response to our chamber production of Rameau's *Pigmalion* in the Recital Hall at the beginning of March, and we look forward to welcoming all of you to the Main Stage for our *Fledermaus* at the end of April (see the Date Line on p.9) This production will be fully staged, with projected sets and theatrical lighting by Joey Moro, costumes selected by our stage director, Brenda Harris, with furniture and props borrowed from the Theater Arts Department and other prop-rental houses. I'll conduct the Stony Brook Opera cast and chorus, and the Stony Brook Symphony orchestra.

Don't miss this production of Strauss' delightful comic masterpiece, which will be sung in English with projected titles. I hope to see many of you there at the performances.

Finally, I want to express my profound gratitude to all of you for your support of our program over the years.

Sincerely,
David Lawton

NOTES ON THE OPERA

RYAN MINOR

Few works in the operatic canon are as readily identified with a particular city as Johann Strauss's comic operetta *Die Fledermaus* [The Bat], which for many audiences serves as a musical postcard of Vienna: a ball, waltz after waltz, and a telltale mixture of sentimentality and vibrant wit. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine the operetta without Vienna as its central reference and muse, or for that matter a storybook Vienna without hearing the sparkling waltzes of *Die Fledermaus*.

It's all the more surprising, then, to realize that the roots of Strauss's most successful operetta are not Viennese—not even, necessarily, the waltz itself! In fact, there is relatively little in *Die Fledermaus* that cannot be traced directly back to Parisian operetta, most notably those of Jacques Offenbach. The situation is somewhat similar to that of serious German and Italian opera of the later nineteenth century, which were unthinkable without the influence—often disavowed—of French grand opera (Wagner and Verdi both bear the unmistakable trace of Meyerbeer). Yet in the case of operetta Vienna was even *more* obviously indebted to its Parisian forebears, and there is also no reason to believe that Strauss's audiences would have denied the Parisian imprint.

In many ways the counterpart to *Die Fledermaus* is Offenbach's *La Vie Parisienne* [The Parisian Life], an enormously successful operetta that was notable not simply for “representing” Paris but for doing so in modern dress, and by treating topical subjects. Its plot is fairly similar to that of Strauss's operetta, as is its construction around large party scenes. And while most of us today would identify the cancan as the quintessential sound of Offenbach's Paris—the most famous, in his *Orphée aux Enfers* [Orpheus in the Underworld] is just one of many—it is worth pointing out that many French operettas included *waltzes* that were, at the time, just as popular. What's more, they were popular in Vienna, where Offenbach's operettas were box office hits in the decades surrounding *Die Fledermaus*'s composition in 1874.

Not only the form of Strauss's operetta was indebted to Paris; so was its source material, *Le Réveillon*, a three-act comedy by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy that was produced at the home of *La Vie Parisienne*, the Palais Royal. A *réveillon* is a Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve midnight dinner; this tradition was more or less unknown among even the famously Francophilic Viennese, so it was swapped out for the more familiar ball. But otherwise much of *Le Réveillon* remains intact in *Die Fledermaus*, though of course the character names were switched to German in order to make the transplant to Central Europe more believable. (Interestingly, Richard Traubner has pointed out that *Le Réveillon* is itself indebted to a German farce by Roderich Benedix, *Das Gefängnis* [The Prison], that premiered in Berlin in the 1840s.)

Despite their very different titles—The Bat, The Midnight Supper, and The Prison—all three works tell more or less the same story: shortly before he is to report to prison for assault, Eisenstein (to use the character's names from the Strauss) is persuaded by his friend Falke to attend a ball at the home of Prince Orlofsky. At the party, he flirts with, but fails to recognize, both his wife and his maid (the operatic crutch of mistaken identities got a new lease on life with operetta). He also fails to realize that the entire party is a huge charade masterminded by Falke, for Orlofsky's amusement, to enact revenge on Eisenstein for forcing him to walk home from a previous ball, in broad daylight, dressed as a bat. In prison the next morning all is revealed, forgiven, and chalked up to Champagne.

As even this cursory sketch shows, there is little to the plot that is specifically Viennese; the setting could easily be anywhere in aristocratic Europe. And in fact, Strauss actually wrote a whole series of national dances for the second act—Hungarian, Russian, Spanish, Scottish, and Polish—that more or less announce a cosmopolitan Europe as the true setting of the piece. Those dances not always performed (their replacement is, of course, Strauss waltzes), but their initial composition by Strauss should serve as a reminder both that a cosmopolitan

mix of nationalities underlies the work, and that that mix could be expressed through dance. Indeed, it is dance in many forms—not only the waltz but polka and the *csárdás*, a Hungarian folk dance—that truly animates Strauss’s score.

But of course it is the waltz that is most prominent in *Die Fledermaus*—so much so, grumbled the Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick at the work’s premiere, that “the waltz stops the action.” That may not be such a bad thing nowadays, when the operetta’s reliance on mistaken identity and nostalgic sentimentality can be a hard sell for some audiences. It should also be pointed out that in the 19th century the waltz was far more sexualized, even risqué, than we think of it today: often danced at a faster tempo, and requiring that partners hold on to each other very closely in order not to succumb to the centrifugal force that its vertiginous choreography demanded. In other words, one might respond to Hanslick’s complaint that, especially in a work about illicit romance, the waltz didn’t stop the action; it *was* the action.

Following its premiere, Strauss’s operetta was a moderate success in Vienna, but hardly a hit; the mutual identification of Vienna with *Die Fledermaus* and *Die Fledermaus* with Vienna only developed in subsequent decades. In the meantime, however, the work was quite popular elsewhere, most notably Berlin. That is where the first source material had come from, of course, but more importantly it is, along with Gilbert and Sullivan’s London, the next city to produce its own style of operetta. To be sure, the Berlin operettas by Paul Abraham and Eduard Künneke are less sentimental, and far more politically engaged, than the Viennese works by Strauss and, later, Franz Lehár. But initially, the success of *Die Fledermaus* outside of Vienna is a useful reminder that Strauss’s composition became the most performed operetta in the world not only because it represented Vienna, but also because connected with so much outside Vienna as well.

DIE FLEDERMAUS SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Vienna, New Year’s Eve, 1899. Outside the Eisensteins’ apartment, the tenor Alfred serenades his old flame Rosalinde, who is now married to Gabriel von Eisenstein. Adele, Rosalinde’s chambermaid, wonders how to get the night off to attend a glamorous New Year’s Eve ball to which her sister has invited her. She tells her mistress she must visit a sick aunt, but Rosalinde refuses to let her go. Alfred appears and declares his love to Rosalinde, who resists him until he begins to sing. Hearing someone coming, she sends Alfred away, but not before he has convinced her to let him return later. Eisenstein and his lawyer, Blind, arrive from a session in court: Eisenstein has been sentenced to eight days in jail for assaulting a ticket officer and must begin his term that very night. He furiously dismisses Blind. His friend Falke urges Eisenstein to delay going to jail until morning and instead join him at the ball, which is being given by the wealthy Prince Orlofsky. Falke tells Eisenstein to bring along his infamous pocket watch to charm the ladies. While Eisenstein changes, Falke invites Rosalinde to the ball as well, telling her that if she comes in disguise, she’ll be able to observe her husband flirting with other women. Rosalinde at first doesn’t like the idea but changes her mind when Eisenstein reappears in evening dress. She joins Adele in a bittersweet farewell as her husband heads off to “prison.” Angry at Eisenstein’s deception, she then tells Adele to go see her “aunt” and receives the ardent Alfred. Their rendezvous is interrupted by the prison warden Frank, who has come to arrest Eisenstein. Rosalinde persuades Alfred to preserve her good name by posing as her husband, and Frank carts Alfred off to jail.

ACT II

In the ballroom of Prince Orlofsky’s villa, the guests gossip about their host, who has a habit of paying someone to try to make him laugh—usually in vain. Orlofsky doubts that Falke’s promised evening of entertainment will brighten his spirits, but proclaims his guests should behave however they want and do anything they like. Adele arrives—to the surprise of her sister Sally, a dancer, who claims she never invited her. Sally worries Adele isn’t classy enough to attend the ball, so they decide to present her as a Russian actress named Olga. Eisenstein enters, posing as a Frenchman, per Falke’s instructions. He immediately identifies Adele as his wife’s maid, but she laughs him off. Frank is also posing as a Frenchman, and he and Eisenstein

become fast friends. Frank is smitten with Sally and “Olga.” Finally Rosalinde arrives, disguised as a Hungarian countess. Angry to spot her husband flirting with her maid, she sings an impassioned ode to her betrayed homeland. When a smitten Eisenstein starts flirting with her, she manages to steal his pocket watch. Midnight is approaching, and Falke entertains the guests with the story of how he earned the nickname of Dr. Fledermaus: one drunken evening, when he was dressed as a bat for a costume ball, his best friend Eisenstein played a practical joke on him that made him the laughingstock of Vienna. The crowd toasts drink, love, and brotherhood until the stroke of midnight, when the new year begins. The guests dance through the night. As the clock strikes six, Eisenstein, whose attempts to retrieve his watch from Rosalinde have failed, rushes off to jail.

ACT III

Frosch the jailer is vexed by the late arrival of his boss, Frank, and by the nonstop singing of Alfred in cell number 12. Frank finally appears, tipsy and enraptured by memories of his magical evening. Sally and Adele arrive, per Falke’s instructions. Adele hopes Frank might further her stage aspirations. Frank sends them off and then admits Eisenstein, who says he has come to serve his sentence. He is surprised to learn his cell is already occupied by a man who claims to be him and who was found in his apartment with Rosalinde. Blind arrives, claiming he was summoned by the man in cell 12 to handle a case of false arrest. Determined to get to the bottom of the matter, Eisenstein snatches Blind’s cloak, glasses, and wig to disguise himself as the lawyer and confront the impostor. At that moment, Rosalinde rushes in. She tries to secure Alfred’s release and asks “Blind” to press divorce charges against her errant husband, but is offended when the “lawyer” seems to take Eisenstein’s side. Dropping his disguise, Eisenstein accuses his wife of promiscuity, at which point Rosalinde produces his watch. Both lament the impasse at which they’ve arrived, admitting that divorce would be a shame, since they really do love each other. Falke arrives to gloat over the success of his plan. Orlofsky arrives with his guests in tow just in time to hear the story—and breaks into hysterical laughter. All sing a final paean to the joys of champagne.

--The Metropolitan Opera

Interview with Brenda Harris and Joey Moro

David Lawton (hereafter DL): Between staging rehearsals for our upcoming production of *Die Fledermaus*, I found time to sit down with our stage director, Brenda Harris (BH), and our projections and lighting designer Joey Moro (JM).

DL: I'm excited that we are using projected sets for this production. We have only had them once before, for our production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* in 2010. Joachim Schamberger directed that production, and also designed the projections. The opera was set at a country club with a golf course. At the time I bought a complete set of white legs, and the set was projected onto the white legs and a cyclorama. It looked beautiful, and it also cost considerably less than a constructed set. Brenda and I decided that we wanted to try this approach again, and we are very pleased to present Joey in his Stony Brook Opera debut. Joey, Brenda has been telling me about some of the discussions that you have had with her, and with Elizabeth Silver, production manager of the Staller Center. I understand that you are planning quite different uses of the stage space for each of the three acts of the opera. Please tell us what you have in mind, and how each act will look in terms of your projected sets.

JM: Projection is a medium that, like performance in general, works best when it is a successful collaboration. That is to say, projection works well when it is on something...with some substance. Whether that surface is a three dimensional shape, or a textured painted surface, anything available to break up the image, and blend it into the world, is a welcome addition. We were presented with the challenge of creating some interesting environments for the three acts of the opera, without the budget to build any physical scenery. When I started looking over the drafting of the building, and examining past photos of performances in the space, I noted the large orchestra shell that has been part of the venue since its construction in the 70s. This shell has a couple of different layers or parts, (side walls, back wall, ceiling,) that are able to move in and out as part of the space’s ability to be a multi faceted venue. So, we are going to be using the orchestra shell in its entirety for Act 1, (inside Eisenstein's study.) We will map projections to this textured and angled surface. Then in Act 2, the whole shell will go away, and we will be greeted with the expansive rear cyclorama and theatrical legs for the Ball, projecting on the cyc along with lighting. And finally, for the Act 3 prison cell, we will bring back select pieces of the shell to create that smaller environment, and project onto it.

DL: Brenda, your concept of the opera in terms of staging has clearly been an important guide to Joey in his planning. What dramatic considerations were particularly important to you in terms of the way the set would look?

BH: Because of this "minimalist" approach with regard to the set, I wanted Joey to be able to be more elaborate with our projections. I also wanted each act to be able to "suggest" a different locale. When Joey saw the orchestra shell and suggested using it for the Eisenstein house, I thought it was a great idea. My hope is that it will give us not only the feeling of a room but also hard surfaces to use for the

projections. The Staller main stage is quite wide and for some of the scenes, I wanted a more intimate feel. I believe the way we're changing the space will facilitate that. I hope this will also allow us to be both literal and abstract with the projections depending on the mood of the characters.

DL: Joey, you are also our lighting designer. What is the relation between your two roles as projections designer (set) and lighting designer? How do you plan to use lighting to enhance the effect of your sets?

JM: Projection and lighting share a very common language. The simple difference here is that the lighting will be taking care of the people, making them look good, and feel part of a world, without spilling onto the scenic surfaces. The projection has to illuminate the scenic surfaces, making them look good and feel of a world, without spilling onto the people! Opera especially has a rich history of almost all of the design elements coming from a single scenographer, making a cohesive vision very easy to execute. Wagner wrote the opera, directed it, designed the set, lighting, costumes, and in the case of Bayreuth, he even designed the theater! So the opportunity to work on more than one discipline in a production is an exciting chance to be able to push the visual world of the play to a detailed collaboration with the music and the director's staging to produce a striking piece.

DL: Brenda, for our semi-staged concert performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 2014 and *La Bohème* in 2016, we had the singers staged on what is actually the orchestra pit, with the orchestra behind them on the stage. For both those productions, you had the singers wear basic black, but each one had a special costume piece or two that indicated something about his/her role, character, or social status, etc. I understand that you have something similar in mind for this production. Two aspects of this production are quite different from those two concert performances. First, the orchestra will be in the pit as it is in any opera house. Second, the chorus will be performing from memory, and will be staged into the action, instead of singing from risers with music as they did for the other two shows. What sort of look do you have in mind for the principals and the chorus in terms of costuming?

BH: I'm planning a similar idea for us in *Fledermaus* and I'm thrilled to have the use of the full stage and to give the singers the experience of having the orchestra in the pit. I want the production to be a bit timeless in that it's not in any particular period, though in Act Two, we're going for a mostly black/white *film noir* kind of attitude. We're still in the beginning stages of rehearsal so it remains to be seen how all this morphs and pans out but the singers seem on board with the idea and the chorus is very excited about it.



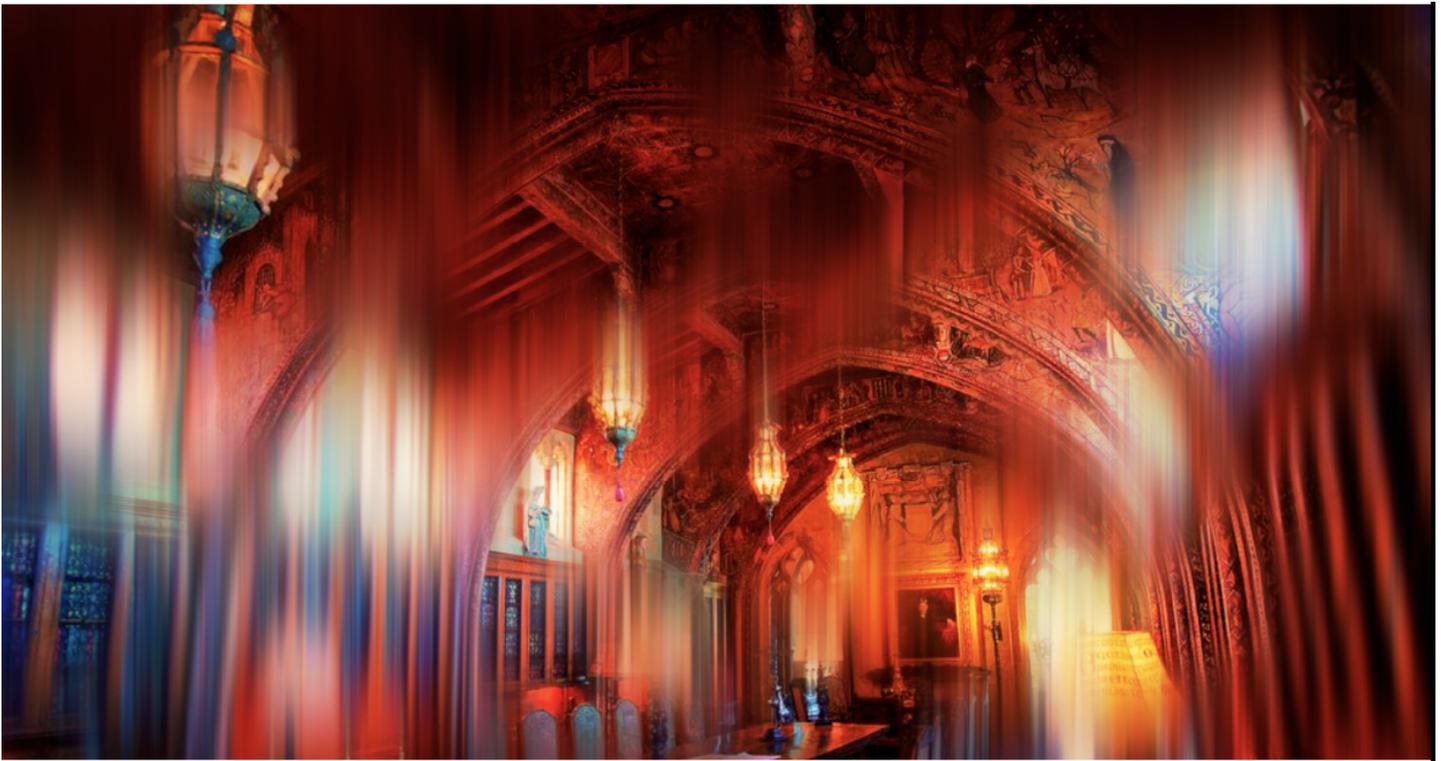
Brenda Harris, (Stage Director)

One of America's finest sopranos, **Brenda Harris** has appeared in leading roles with many of the world's most prominent opera companies and orchestras. She has performed with The Metropolitan Opera, Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Italy, Washington National Opera, Arizona Opera, The Minnesota Opera, New York City Opera, Opera du Rhin in Strasbourg, Utah Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Pacific, the Canadian Opera Company, Edmonton Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, among others. Ms. Harris has recorded leading roles for Newport Classic, including Scarlatti's *Ishmael*, Haydn's *La Cantarina* and *The Creation*, Handel's *Tolomeo* on Vox, and Daron Hagen's *Shining Brow* on Naxos. She has directed *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *La Bohème* as well as scenes programs for Stony Brook Opera. She has directed scenes for the Young Artist Programs of Des Moines Metro Opera and Opera NEO in San Diego, and will make her international directing debut at the Wexford Festival in Ireland this coming Fall with *Fanciulla del West*.



Joey Moro (Lighting and Projection Designer)

Joey Moro (lighting and projections designer) is a New York based designer, who designs lighting, projection, and scenery. Recent Lighting: The Baltimore Waltz, (Syracuse Univ, Light and Set,) Streetcar, (Le Petit Theatre) Hair, (Hofstra Univ) Eurydice Project, (Dublin) Detroit, (Theatre Squared,) Dracula, (Mile Square Theater,) Awful Event! (Ars Nova, light and set.) Recent projection work, Vietgone, (Theatre Squared,) The Last Five Years, (Mexico City,) Only You Can Prevent Wildfires, (Teatro Circulo,) Once On This Island, (Le Petit Theatre,) Death of the War Poets, (Sheen Center,) Orange Julius, (Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre,) Long Gone Daddy, (Mile Square Theater,) Orlando, (Set and Projection.) Joey is a founding member of SpaceWing Design, a collective that aims to set the new standard for design excellence and unbridled creativity in the performing arts. MFA, Yale School of Drama.



Joey Moro: content/process sketch for Act I projected set



Joey Moro: content/process sketch for Act II project set: The Ball

Meet our guest artists



Soprano **Julia Radosz** has been praised by Musical America, impressing with her “warm tone and agile phrasing”. This past season, she made role debuts of Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*) with Opera Orlando, Musetta (*La Bohème*) with Wichita Grand Opera, and Madama Butterfly with Raylynmor Opera. Recent roles include Violetta (*La Traviata*) with Northern Dutchess Symphony, Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) and Antonia (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*) with Tri-Cities Opera, Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*) with

North Shore Music Festival, Lydia Larkspur in *The Rivals* with Bronx Opera, and Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) with Opera Naples. Ms. Radosz is a winner of the Jenny Lind Competition, The Marcella Sembrich Competition, a Grant Winner from Opera Buffs Foundation, Anna Sosenko Trust, and Career Bridges Foundation. Upcoming engagements include a Puccini concert with Rhode Island Symphony.



Tenor **Christopher Reames** is establishing an exciting and engaging career as a concert artist, recitalist, and dynamic performer on the operatic stage. Praised for his “lustrous” singing and “great musicality” by the *The Examiner*, his compelling performances captivate audiences with beauty and sensitivity. Christopher has appeared as a finalist in national competitions with the Joy in Singing, New York Oratorio Society, National Association of the Teachers of Singing, Art Song Preservation Society of New York, and the Franco-American Vocal Academy organizations. His recent operatic performances include roles in *Oberon*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Zaide*, and *Die Zauberflöte*. His recent concert performances include: *The Creation*, *Elijah*, *The Messiah*, *La Fiesta de la Posada*, J.S. Bach’s *Magnificat*, *Christmas Oratorio*, *St. John Passion*, several sacred cantatas, and secular works by Purcell. His diverse song repertoire spans more than 400 years from Monteverdi, Handel, Haydn and Mozart, through Beethoven and Schumann to Debussy, Poulenc, Britten, Barber and Messiaen. He is an alumnus of the Tanglewood Music Center, SongFest, Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, and the Aspen Music Festival. Christopher holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from SUNY at Stony Brook, NY.



Chad Kranak, a “powerful-voiced tenor, who boasts stunning high notes,” is known for both his musicality and his sparkling humor. This season’s performances include the role of Geppetto in the children’s opera *Pinocchio* with St. Petersburg Opera, as well as workshops of a few new pieces with the American Lyric Theater, and premiering the role Mincius in Robert Hall’s new opera *The Calliope Project*. He has also performed as the tenor soloist in numerous oratorio and concert works this season: Handel’s *Messiah* (Brooklyn Contemporary Chorus, Grace Church), Schubert’s *Nachtelle* and *Mass in G* (Riverdale Choral Society), and he will be the tenor soloist in Thea Musgrave’s *Voices of our Ancestors* with the New York Virtuoso Singers this spring. Other roles include Rhombosallyl in *L’île de Tulipitan* (Light Opera of New York), Doge in Rossini’s *Otello* (Bard Music Festival), Paulo in Rachmaninov’s *Francesca da Rimini* (Garden State Opera), the title role in *Albert Herring* (Bronx Opera), Martin in *The Tender Land* (Chelsea Opera), and Tamino in *The Magic Flute* (Regina Opera). He was also a dancer in Mark Morris’ production of Britten’s rarely performed *Curlew River* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music this past spring. Chad made his Stony Brook Opera debut in 2014 as Normanno in our semi-staged concert performances of Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

**Stony Brook Opera
Dateline 2018
Save the dates!**

**Main Stage production of Johann Strauss' operetta *Die Fledermaus*
(Two performances)**

--Saturday, April 28, 2018 at 8 p.m., Staller Center Main Stage,
Stony Brook University

--Sunday, April 29, 2018 at 3 p.m.: Staller Center Main Stage, Stony
Brook University