

## VIEWPOINT: Some Key Transitions by Dan Shea

David Ronis has been in town for barely a month, but already had prepared key decisions for the *Albert Herring* sets during the summer—as you can tell from his Progress Report on page 3. Thus he can use the weeks before opening night, October 24, to help his cast work out their parts in this classic—and musically tricky—ensemble opera.

Opera in Madison lost three special ladies this year: Helen Iltis in April, Lois Dick in July, and Margaret Winston in September. Their connections to Madison Opera were strong, and their support for University Opera was important too. We appreciated Helen's loyal presence, with husband Ted, for our student productions in Music Hall. They were valued presences at our opening night shows, starting with Props' University Club dinners, for many years. I especially treasure the memory of Helen's so typically kind call last April 5, in appreciation for the Béatrice et Bénédiction edition of this newsletter and its page-long article on Kitt Reuter-Foss. Just three days later she suffered the serious fall that took her from us. Similarly, Lois Dick had maintained a scholarship fund for young singers for many years, and served several years on our Props Board—she sponsored our annual Fall kickoff Board dinner with great enthusiasm. And Margaret was a valued volunteer seamstress

for our costume department, always with much-appreciated brownies on opening nights. These ladies have been unique, and each one is greatly missed!

On a happier note, we can celebrate Lindsay Metzger's successful audition for a place on the Ryan Opera Center's roster at Lyric Opera. The final audition competition took place on the Lyric stage September 21, and she was one of seven winners selected for 2015-16. Lindsay completed her MM last spring, after memorable performances as Ariodante and Béatrice.

If you were at our September 14 Showcase Concert, you saw the singers' well-delivered performances and the high-energy audience reactions. Also much appreciated were the very supportive comments made by School of Music Director Susan Cook and Associate Dean Susan Zaeske, as well as the active participation of this year's Opera Director David Ronis and his predecessors Karlos Moser and Bill Farlow. The high-energy discussion continued during Props' well-organized reception: another successful Showcase, our fifth!

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## A Season of "Serious Comedy" Begins with Britten's *Albert Herring*

- **Albert Herring, Chamber Opera by Benjamin Britten**
- **Libretto by Eric Crozier, after Maupassant's *Le Rosier de Madame Husson***
- **University Opera production directed by David Ronis**
- **UW Opera Orchestra conducted by Kyle Knox**



With *Albert Herring* playing October 24-26-28, and *The Magic Flute* slated for March 13-15-17, University Opera is presenting two comic operas based on the sort of crises young people face as they come of age in a seemingly hostile world.

The story of *Albert Herring* begins when the town council in the imaginary English village of Loxford, motivated by the formidable Lady Billows, meets in order to select a "chaste and virtuous" Queen of the May. When no young lady can be found to meet those requirements (horrors!), the council decides to choose a King of the May instead—and young Albert Herring is deemed perfect: he works for his mum in their greengrocer's shop, strong as a horse and perhaps a bit naive, but certainly virtuous. Henpecked by his mother, Albert dreams of going out on his own, but does not yet have the emotional wherewithal to break loose from her tether. That changes when his contemporaries, Sid and Nancy, spike his drink during the celebration of Albert's award. Under the influence of alcohol, he conquers his inhibitions and disappears overnight. The next morning, the whole town believes him to be dead. But Albert reappears and proceeds to tell them all off—not only a coming of age story but one that gently examines the nature of hypocrisy in modern society.

Although originally set in 1900, the University Opera production transports *Albert Herring* to 1947, the year it was written. At that time England was still reeling from wartime hardships. By setting the opera at the time of its creation, University Opera hopes to reflect some of the social and economic challenges faced by Britten and his colleagues when they founded the English Opera Group. Some of Britten's most important work dates from this period in which he wrote for the same forces of 13 instrumentalists and a small group of singers, and consequently made a huge contribution to the genre of chamber opera.

The 13-character cast of *Albert Herring* features **William Ottow** and **Joshua Sanders** in the title role [where here and below italics indicate a Sunday, October 26 matinee performance]. Additionally, the production includes **Alaina Carlson** and **Jennifer DeMain** as Nancy, **Brian Schneider** as Sid, **Sheila Wilhelmi** as Florence Pike, **Joel Rathmann** as the Vicar, **Tia Cleveland** as Mrs. Herring, **Dennis Gotkowski** as the Mayor, **Nicole Heinen** and **Sarah Richardson** as Miss Wordsworth, **Emi Chen** as Emmie, and **Emily Weaver** as Cis. Three local performers join the cast—**Rick Henslin** as Superintendent of Police Budd, as well as **Michael Chiaverini** and **Eli Kuzma**, boys who sing in the Madison Youth Choir, sharing the role of Harry.

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Also, **Jessica Kasinski** is Lady Billows on Friday/Sunday, and **Tyana O'Connor** takes that role on Tuesday.

The instrumental forces for *Albert Herring* will be the University Opera Orchestra, conducted by Kyle Knox, with musical preparation by **Mr. Knox, Chan Mi Jean, and Thomas Kasdorf**.

The production staff includes scenic designer **Stephen Hudson-Mairet**, costume designers **Sydney Krieger** and **Hyewon Park**, lighting designer **Jordan Kardasz**, prop designer **Dana Fralick**, scene painting advisor **Liz Rathke**, technical director **Greg Silver**, and production stage manager **Erin McDermott**. Student staff include **Emi Chen**, costumes; **Katie Oliver** and **Fabian Qamar**, props; **Melanie Treuhaft**, scene painter; **Briana Miller**, master electrician; and **Lukas Heins**, assistant carpenter.

Tickets are \$22 for the general public, \$18 for senior citizens, and \$10 for UW-Madison students, available in advance through the Campus Arts Ticketing office at 265-ARTS and online at <http://www.arts.wisc.edu/> (click "box office"). Tickets may also be purchased in person at the Wisconsin Union Theater Box

## Special Vocal Events Coming Up

**October 6, Nathaniel Stampley Master Class** on vocalism for classical and musical theater songs, with singers from UW and Madison Youth Choirs. 4:30-6:00 in Music Hall (free, open to all).

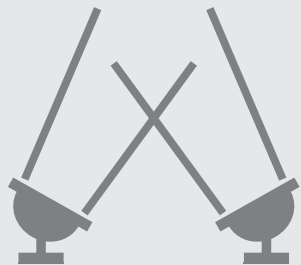
**October 9, Opera for the Young** – cast concert and reception (5:00-7:00 pm) introducing their new show *Beauty and the Beast*. Call 277-9560 for details on time and place a.s.a.p., there is a time limit for reservations! (free will contribution)

**November 2, Voice Faculty Showcase Concert.** 7:30 pm in Mills (\$10, students free), for details see School of Music's concert calendar.

**November 9, Met Opera National Council Auditions.** 10:00 am - midafternoon, at Wilson Center for the Arts, Brookfield. For details, check [moncwi.org](http://moncwi.org).

**November 21-23, Madison Opera's *Fidelio*.** Overture Hall.

**November 25, UW Opera Workshop Scenes.** 7:30 pm, Music Hall (free).



## Albert Herring *continued*

Office Monday-Friday, 11:30 am-5:30 pm and Saturdays, 12:00-5:00 pm and the Vilas Hall Box Office, Monday-Friday, 11:30 am-5:30 pm, and after 5:30 pm on University Theatre performance evenings.

Because shows often sell out, advance purchase is recommended. If unsold tickets remain, they may be purchased at the door beginning one hour before the performance. The Carol Rennebohm Auditorium is located in Music Hall, at the foot of Bascom Hill on Park Street.

University Opera is a cultural service of the School of Music at the University of Wisconsin-Madison whose mission is to provide comprehensive operatic training and performance opportunities for our students and operatic programming to the community. For more information, please contact [opera@music.wisc.edu](mailto:opera@music.wisc.edu).

See next page for a dining idea on October 24.

## Synopsis for *Albert Herring*

**Act I. Scene 1.** All of the local notables are gathered in Lady Billows' breakfast room to select a Queen of the May for the village celebration. Housekeeper Florence Pike has found incriminating evidence that disqualifies all of the girls nominated. Police superintendent Budd suggests that the very well-behaved Albert Herring would make a suitable King of the May.

**Scene 2.** Sid and his girlfriend Nancy tease Albert at the greengrocer's shop that he runs with his mother, who clearly dominates Albert. The act closes with the committee informing Albert of his election as King of May.

**Act II. Scene 1.** Sid laces Albert's lemonade with rum before the festival begins. Albert is crowned King of the May, accepts his prize money, and eagerly drinks the lemonade. **Scene 2.** An intoxicated Albert returns to the grocer's shop. He hears Sid and Nancy lamenting that Albert is so dominated by his mother. He decides to break free and have a night out on the town. When his mother returns home she thinks that Albert is already asleep.

**Act III.** Albert is still missing the next afternoon and is feared to be dead. The mourning is interrupted when a disheveled Albert returns to the grocer's shop. He tells of his night of drinking, which shocks everyone. He accuses his mother of provoking him endlessly. The shocked townspeople leave. Now in command, Albert invites the village children into the shop for free fruit.

## Recordings

The classic 1964 Britten/Pears recording is available on London/Decca. Newer CD versions conducted by Richard Hickox on the Chandos label, and by Steuart Bedford on Naxos, also are recommended. A studio filming based on the 1985 Peter Hall production at Glyndebourne is available on a Kultur DVD.

## Madison Opera Trips' bus excursions to Lyric Opera's 2014-15

season are scheduled for:

October 22 – *Capriccio*

November 12 – *Il Trovatore*

December 15 – *Anna Bolena*

February 18 – *Tannhäuser* (the first three at 7:30 pm, the Wagner at 6:00 pm). For information on these Chicago trips, call Fern Lawrence at (608) 238-1529 or [FernLawrence@hotmail.com](mailto:FernLawrence@hotmail.com)

## A Progress Report on *Albert Herring*, from Director Ronis

"I'm quite pleased with the way rehearsals have been going for *Albert Herring*. The cast has done very well meeting the challenges of learning a difficult score and they are quickly transforming that work into vivid character portrayals. I was particularly impressed the other night when we were working on Act 2 Scene 1—the big May Day Feast scene. We had rehearsed it once prior and in this second go at the scene, it ran remarkably smoothly. At this point (I'm writing on September 19) the first two acts have been staged. Looking forward, we're going to be going for more detailed characterizations and the storytelling as well as more nuanced acting work. In the meantime, Kyle Knox continues to nudge the cast toward more expressive musical interpretations in terms of dynamics, phrasing, pitch, and rhythmic accuracy (this is a tough piece of music!), and vocal characterization.

"In the tech departments, things are proceeding. For this production, set designer Stephen Hudson-Mairet, whose day job is Associate Professor and Chair Digital Media and Performing Arts at Marquette University, has created an ingenious design for the tricky space of Music Hall. Lady Billows' parlor and Mrs. Herring's greengrocery are being built on two sides of the same walls. In order to change the scene, we will close the house curtain and revolve these wall units around. Our lighting designer, Jordan Kardasz from Chicago, is busy devising a lighting plot. In the costume department, Sydney Krieger and Hyewon Park are in the midst of pulling outfits from various sources and fitting them on the cast so that we can make decisions about who will wear what. All in all, we're on schedule and not feeling any particular time crunch stress. Onward!"

## A Dining Idea for Friday, October 24, Opening Night for *Albert Herring*

Come to the University Club for a social hour: cash bar and fellowship 5:00–5:45 pm in the Fireside Room (lower level). Then, from 5:45–7:10 pm we'll share an East Anglican dinner served plated style in the adjacent Banquet Room.

**Our Program:** Joining us to discuss the night's opera is Joshua Sanders, who will appear as Albert Herring at Sunday's matinee performance. Josh is a senior from Spring Green with many awards to his credit.

### The Menu, with choice of entrée:

**SALAD:** Mixed greens with house dressing; choice of breads.

### ENTRÉES – Choose one of the following:

1. Poached Sole with lemon and dill, Brussels Sprouts, and Mashed Potatoes
2. Pork Bangers over Braised Cabbage, and Mashed Potatoes
3. Wild Mushroom Strudel with Brussels Sprouts and Mashed Potatoes

**DESSERT:** Figgy Pudding

*This meal is \$30 inclusive (there are no additional tip/tax fees). Choice of coffee, tea, milk; or wine and beer from the cash bar.*

Please send your list of dinner partners, with their choices of entrée, and a check for your group (\$30 per person).

Checks should be payable to "UW Opera Props," and please mail before October 20 to Peg Wallace, 2220 Chamberlain Avenue, Madison, WI 53726.

**Questions?** Call Dan Shea at 836-6911. The University Club is located at 803 State Street Mall.

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I wish to join, or renew, my Opera Props membership for 2014-15 at the following level:

- Individual @ \$25    Household @ \$35    Supporter @ \$75  
 Sustainer @ \$150    Benefactor @ \$500    Producer @ \$2,500    Other @ \$\_\_\_\_\_

OR: I am already a 2014-15 Props member, but wish to make an additional contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ now.

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