

FRIENDS OF OPERA

UNIVERSITY OF
NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

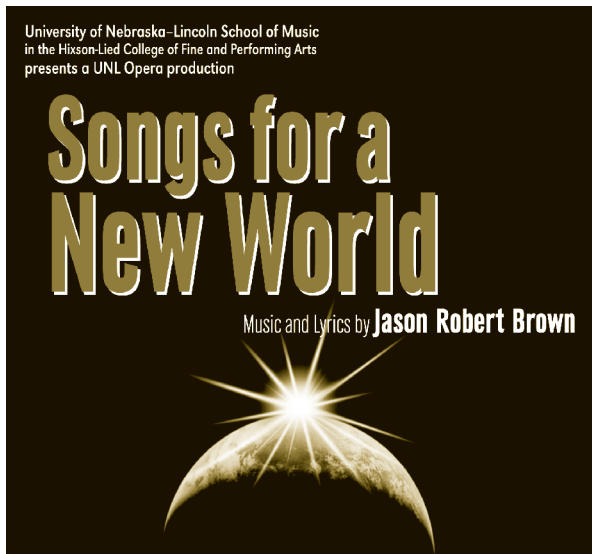
Support~Inspire~Applaud

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2

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Songs For A New World: Not an opera...or is it?

For the first time, Prof. Alisa Belflower (UNL Coordinator of Musical Theatre Studies and director and host of UNL's annual "Celebration of American Song") will be directing a UNL Opera production when she stages *Songs For A New World*. Tony-winning composer, Jason Robert Brown, penned music and lyrics for this work, which premiered in 1995 with an eight-performance run in New York City. The response to the premier created more demand for tickets than the eight performances could sustain. Why such enthusiasm for this show? *Songs For A New World* is an unprecedented, musical celebration of the human spirit.



Each scene in the two act show introduces new characters set in varied locales. The idea connecting the scenes is one of visiting a moment in time, when life presents the opportunity to step into an uncharted future with only faith, hope and dreams for courage. Some characters take a leap of faith and others aren't ready yet—resulting in a stirring tribute to the human spirit, which endures challenges by learning through both leaping and falling.

The cast features UNL's vocal students: Adam Fieldson (the first Friends of Opera Scholarship Winner), Cami Philgreen (2007 Friends of Opera Scholarship Winner), Bryan McKnight (2008 West Central Regional Singer of the Year Winner), Allison Frenzel, Sam Hartley, Dani Cisna, Shani Daws, John Gieringer (all winners of undergraduate National Association of the Teachers of Singing Awards), Stephen Todd a masters student from New York City (most recently seen as "Oberon" in UNL Opera's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Beth King a current theatre masters student (who last played the "Countess" in UNL Opera's *Le Nozze di Figaro*), and a guest appearance by UNL School of Theatre Prof. Stan Brown.

This phenomenal cast brings an exciting production intimately presented with the audience seated around the set on the Kimball Hall stage. Unlike most musicals (because it contains almost no dialogue) and unlike most operas (because it derives its musical language from popular music genres), *Songs For A New World* is not to be missed. It is an evocative show you will embrace on intimate terms all your own.

Songs For A New World

by Jason Robert Brown

Thursday, February 267:30 p.m.
Friday, February 277:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 287:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 1 3:00 p.m.

Kimball Recital Hall

11th & R Streets

Adults \$20
Faculty, students and seniors . . . \$10

Tickets available at the door or
through Lied Center Box Office,
472-4747

Opera Preview Talk

by Director Alisa Belflower
On Stage 30 minutes before curtain

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ADDIO...SORT OF

Dear Friends,

For nearly seven years I've had the honor and joy of leading Friends of Opera. Thanks to the generosity of many members and friends, we've contributed nearly \$200,000 to UNL Opera and had a hand in raising about \$250,000 more. We've proudly watched UNL Opera garner two prestigious National Opera Association First Place Awards (*Street Scene* in 2001 and *Dead Man Walking* in 2008) and ten awards at the Waterford International Festival of Light Opera (2002 and 2007), including the first place International Trophy for *The Most Happy Fella* in 2007.

My term as President is expiring in June, but I will remain on the Board and, hopefully, contribute to the growth of Friends of Opera and the success of UNL Opera in other ways. I want to thank all of you for your generous support, but I also want to challenge you to maintain your support during difficult economic times. Thanks to our Board members, present and past, for their loyal service and generous support. They are the best!

Thank you to the dozens of talented UNL singers who have passed through the opera program over the years. Many of you will be lifelong friends of Carole's and mine. You have dazzled us with your artistry and impressed us with your dedication, teamwork and exceptional effort. Thanks to the UNL Administration and the School of Music faculty for their encouragement and cooperation.

Above all, I want to thank Bill Shomos and Ariel Bybee. Friends of Opera could not have been created, and could not have sustained itself,

without them. Ariel added some luster and national visibility at the same time Bill's quiet leadership was positioning UNL Opera for great success. Ariel's vision (along with husband Jim Ford) took UNL Opera to the international stage via the Waterford Festival. Bill's creative direction has now claimed a third National Opera Association First Place Award in ten years. Their significant talents converged to create a tradition of opera excellence at UNL.

Beginning in July, Friends of Opera will come under the talented leadership of IV Dickson. I have great confidence in IV and believe he is the right person to steer the organization through turbulent economic waters to new goals. Please give him your total support.

The phrase "labor of love" is a bit clichéd by now, but it seems to best describe my last seven years. Memorable generosity, memorable productions, memorable friendships - you have given Carole and me great memories to last a lifetime!

Sincerely,



Don Burt, President

FRIENDS OF OPERA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Don Burt, *President* Kathy Friedman, *Vice President* Judy Amber, *Secretary* Diana Warner, *Treasurer*
Ellen Baldwin, Jake Bartlett, Kate Butler, Lucy Buntain Comine, IV Dickson, Kim Einspahr,
Mike Fardella, George Hancock, Dr. Raymond W.S. Lowther, Ginny Parker,
Laurel Shoemaker, Bill Shomos, Jo Stewart, Carol Walker, James Weesner

Friends of Opera is a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation supporting opera at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Dickson to Lead Friends of Opera

Friends of Opera Board member IV Dickson has been chosen as President-Elect and will succeed retiring President Don Burt in July 2009. Dickson has an extensive musical background, as a performer, technician and fund raiser.

A Colorado native, Dickson graduated from UNL in 1999 with a degree in Vocal Performance, after appearing in performances such as *Yeomen of the Guard*, *The Medium* and *Don Giovanni*. He also stage-managed *Così fan tutte* and *O Pioneers!* and then continued in production management and technical direction with Comprehensive Design Solutions and Opera Iowa. He

has also worked with Opera Omaha as Director of Community Programs.

IV currently enjoys his position as a project manager for Nanonation, working with such clients as Harley Davidson, Mercedes Benz and Fontainebleau Resorts. Wife Adrienne (Walker) Dickson is a UNL School of Music Doctoral Candidate, and the couple have a son, Christopher. In addition to working with the School of Music and Friends of Opera, the Dicksons are also active in Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra and Lincoln Community Playhouse.

Musto Opera Enlivens Hopper Paintings Seacrests Underwrite *Later The Same Evening* at Sheldon

John Musto is quickly becoming one of America's most sought after opera composers. Premiered just a few months ago, Musto's brilliant one-act opera *Later The Same Evening* was inspired by five Edward Hopper paintings, including "Room in New York," one of the UNL Sheldon Museum of Art's treasured holdings from its permanent collection. The opera imagines the lives of the figures in these paintings, ingeniously brings them to life, and connects them as characters—both directly and tangentially—on one evening in New York City in 1932.

This unique project results from a collaboration among the UNL School of Music, the Sheldon Museum of Art and Friends of

Opera. Funding is provided through Friends of Opera, because of the generosity of James and Rhonda Seacrest, long-time supporters of Friends of Opera, the School of Music and the Sheldon Museum. The Seacrests are also sponsoring a one-week residency of composer John Musto at the School of Music.

The production will be staged by UNL Director of Opera, William Shomos, in the Sheldon Museum of Art Auditorium for one performance only on Tuesday, April 28 at 7:30 p.m. This event is free and open to the public, but tickets are required. You may call 472-4747 to make your ticket reservations.

UNL Opera Wins Best Opera Production Award Great Showing at NOA Convention

For the third time in ten years, UNL Opera has won the National Opera Association Award for BEST PRODUCTION, this time for its 2008 presentation of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. The 1998 production of *Così fan Tutte* and the 2001 production of *Street Scene* were past winners. All three operas were staged by UNL Director of Opera William Shomos and conducted by UNL Orchestra Conductor Tyler White. The National Opera Association selects winners each year in 5 separate budget categories. Coming in second place to UNL was a production of *La Bohème* produced by the College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati, which is, along with Juilliard and Indiana University, among the most prestigious opera training programs in the United States. This speaks volumes for the quality of opera being produced here in Nebraska.

The competition is "blind peer reviewed." The panel of three opera professionals reviews the entry videos without knowing from which schools they have been submitted. Congratulations go to the UNL students for their excellent work in bringing Jake Heggie's powerful score to life. Laurel

Shoemaker's remarkable set and Todd Clark's stunning lighting design no doubt enhanced the opera's showing in the competition. Upon hearing news of the opera's win, composer Jake Heggie offered his congratulations to Shomos:

"I'm so thrilled for you and your team. BRAVI TUTTI! I mean, HOORAY EVERYBODY! That is just fantastic news. You must be so happy and proud... I loved the production and I loved what you achieved. BRAVO a thousand times over... I'm so touched and moved by your work with the opera."

UNL Opera's *Dead Man Walking* wasn't the only splash UNL made at the 2009 NOA Convention. UNL Lecturer in Voice, and UNL Opera alumna Dr. Jamie Reimer was invited to present a lecture about the life and music Robert Owens, who received the NOA Legacy Award for his lifetime contributions to opera and vocal music by underrepresented minorities. Dr. Reimer coordinated a recital of Owens' art songs featuring UNL faculty, students and alumni. Dr. Reimer teamed up with long-time UNL Voice Professor Donna Harler-Smith for a poster presentation entitled "Heart vs. Head: The implications of Register Sensation on the Characterization of Mozart's Women in *Le Nozze di Figaro*," a project that generated considerable buzz from those in the attendance.

Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY 26, 27 and 28 at 7:30 p.m.

MARCH 1 at 3:00 p.m.

Songs For A New World

UNL Opera

Preview talk on stage 45 minutes
before curtain

Kimball Recital Hall

Tickets: 472-4747

APRIL 25, 2009

ELIJAH

UNL Opera, UNL Orchestra
and UNL combined choirs

7:30 p.m., Lied Center

Tickets: 472-4747

April 27, 2009

LATER THE SAME EVENING

UNL Opera

7:30 p.m., Sheldon Museum of Art
Auditorium

Admission is free, but tickets are required
are recommended

Call 472-4747 for reservations

Friends Membership Dues Reminder

Have you renewed your Friends of Opera membership for the 2008-2009 season?

If you have not contributed since June 30, 2008, please send your donation to:

**Carol Walker, Membership Chair,
2028 "D" Street, Lincoln, NE 68502**

The Friends of Opera Board of Directors thanks you for your support!

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