

Welcome, David Ronis!



Our University Opera's new Director for 2014–15 will be David Ronis, currently on the faculties of the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College/City University of New York, and Hofstra University on Long Island, where he produces and directs opera as well as teaches voice and diction.

"The voice and opera programs are delighted to welcome David Ronis," says Mimmi Fulmer, professor of voice and opera at the School of Music. "Mr. Ronis will direct two full productions for University Opera during the 2014–15 season, as well as join me in teaching Opera Workshop. He brings a background of a distinguished singing career in both opera and musical theater as well as extensive credits as a director. We are fortunate to have him contribute his artistry and experience to our singers and our audiences. I am looking forward to the opportunity to work together to present another wonderful season of University Opera."

Ronis visited UW-Madison in March and says he was "very impressed with the students. Their skill level is very high, they were very engaged, interested and motivated. They asked really difficult questions. I just loved it."

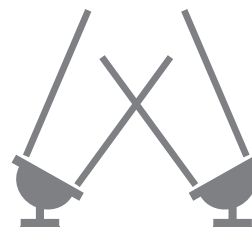
Ronis' resumé is impressive. His 2009 and 2011 productions of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* and Argento's *Postcard From Morocco* won first and third place, respectively, in the National Opera Association Opera Production Competition. His other recent productions include *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Suor Angelica*, *La damoiselle élue*, *The Magic Flute*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *Dido and Aeneas* at Queens College, as well as *Gianni Schicchi* and *Rigoletto* for the Queens Symphony. As a guest director, he has produced Handel's *Acis and Galatea* at the

Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, *From Berlin to Potsdam: A Kurt Weill Cabaret* at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam, and a portion of Gregg Wramage's *Death in Summer* at the Manhattan School of Music, part of their annual "From Page to Stage" series.

Ronis is also the co-director of the Baroque Opera Workshop at Queens College, a faculty member at *La Lingua della Lirica* in Novafeltria, Italy, the Westchester Summer Vocal Institute, the Maryland Summer Center for the Arts, and was recently appointed to the board of the National Opera Association.

Ronis has sung over 50 character operatic roles, including performances of the Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, the Four Servants in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, and Prince Orlovsky in *Die Fledermaus*. He has appeared on stages from Milan's La Scala to Vienna, New York to Hong Kong. He also has performed as a soloist in the world's most famous halls and at summer music festivals and has acted in many musical theater productions, independent films and commercials. He is a member of the National Opera Association, National Association of Teachers of Singing, the College Music Society, Actors Equity Association, the American Guild of Musical Artists, and the Screen Actors Guild.

Ronis received his B.F.A. degree from Purchase College of the State University of New York and the Master of Arts in Opera Studies, an interdisciplinary research degree, from Empire State College/SUNY. He also studied at the Conservatoire Américain in Fontainebleau, France, then under the direction of the legendary teacher, Nadia Boulanger. Additionally, he received the Anthony Gishford Award to attend the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh, England, where he worked with the late Sir Peter Pears.



Coming Up in the New Opera Season: Student Showcase *SAVE THE DATE!*



This year's Student Showcase is scheduled for 3:00 p.m. Sunday, September 14, at the Unitarian Meeting House on University Bay

Drive. We hope you can join this genial event—especially since this year the program will include a favorite soprano alumna:

Shannon Prickett (MM 2012) is now a Resident Artist with Minnesota Opera and will be singing Micaela in their performances of *Carmen* this year. You may recall her memorable performances here in *La Bohème*, *Don Giovanni*, *L'amico Fritz*, *Medea*, and Verdi's *Requiem*. She will join our sterling accompanist Thomas Kasdorf and seven student singers to give you a rousing dose of opera and song.

If you heard the 2012 Showcase concert, your ears may still be ringing from Shannon's performance of "Pace, Pace" from Verdi's *La forza del destino*.

And fear not, Gail Ambrosius is still our chocolatier! **Watch for your invitation**, due later in August.



Next Season at University Opera – Britten and Mozart

The word from David Ronis and Mimmi Fulmer is that next year's season has been scheduled, with Britten's comic opera *Albert Herring* and Mozart's *Magic Flute* slated for October 24, 26, and 28 and March 13, 15, and 17 respectively.

The Opera Workshop's public Scenes programs will be offered on two Tuesday nights, November 25 and April 21.

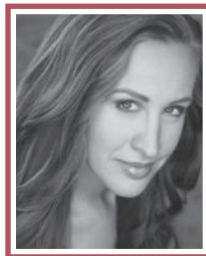
Look for more on this in our next mailing to you later in August, along with an opportunity to support UW Opera Props for 2014–15.

A UW Alumna Progresses to International Stardom

The Voice and Opera programs at UW have produced many successful graduates, as is asserted at the School of Music's [new](http://music.wisc.edu/voice) website (music.wisc.edu/voice):

Recent graduates are performing in major opera, musical theater and concert venues, teaching at large and small universities throughout the United States, and educating the next generation of musicians in public schools.

To explain this assertion, the website provides a link that summarizes the careers of some 40 alums. Two of these have appeared recently in Madison: Emily Birsan (MM 2010) sang at the April and May concerts of the Madison Symphony Orchestra; and Jamie-Rose Guarrine (DM 2005) was a soloist at this July's Opera in the Park. The local publicity for those events described well the busy careers of Emily and Jamie-Rose (who returns to Madison on September 21, see back).



Soprano Brenda Rae (BM 2004) also is much in the news lately, and we focus on her story now. Her burgeoning career was celebrated in a two-page article in *Opera News* (March 2014), where she shared ideas about her career's start here in Madison.

"Rae's knockout coloratura skills in 'Sempre libera' [*La traviata*, summer 2013] at Santa Fe came as no surprise to those who had noted her well-deserved successes in the past few years as Alcina in *Rinaldo* at Glyndebourne, Lucia di Lammermoor at Wiener Staatsoper, Zerbinetta

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A UW Alumna Progresses to International Stardom *continued*

in Bordeaux and Hamburg, Konstanze at Bayerische Staatsoper, and Violetta, Handel's Cleopatra, and the *Hoffmann* Olympia in Frankfurt, where she has been a resident artist since the 2008-09 season. Less expected—but equally persuasive—were the keen dramatic imagination she brought to Violetta's scene with Germont, and the luminous nobility of Rae's phrasing in the final act."

The article continues, "Upcoming engagements for Rae include Amina in a new Frankfurt production of *La Sonnambula*, a project she is

Mimmi then goes on to list some graduates of UW's voice and opera program, and credits Bill for much of their success. The following excerpt from Music's website provides good insight:

The Voice and Opera programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison collaborate to create a supportive and inspiring atmosphere for growth, challenging students to improve as musicians and encouraging them to unfold as artists.

Our faculty combines significant performing careers with individual passions for opera, musical theater, early music, contemporary music, Nordic repertoire, and pedagogical research. With invaluable expertise in the most practical aspects of the musical world, UW Voice and Opera faculty members are dedicated educators, offering outstanding instruction and career advice.

over the moon about. I love singing bel canto. Love it. For me, something just seems so right and so organic about singing it. And Sonnambula is a piece that really made me decide to be an opera singer. Before I was at Juilliard, when I was a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I hadn't really decided to focus on classical voice. But my teachers there were pretty smart. By the end of my sophomore year, they had given me a scene from Sonnambula to do. And I fell in love with opera. I had wanted to be a rock star—another Tori Amos. But that's not what happened."

Brenda knows very well how her education progressed, but her fans may wonder: who were these "smart teachers," and what did they know? Answers to these questions can be found in a recent interview with Brenda's primary teachers at UW, Mimmi Fulmer and Bill Farlow. Here is one quote from that article (*Faculty News*, by Paul Baker - April 2014):

"Mimmi Fulmer says Farlow always listened to a student's voice, then mentally placed what that voice will be able to do several shows ahead. Farlow's hunches generally proved to be correct. 'It's not just that he had a crystal ball,' Fulmer says; 'he also provided students opportunity and training. He could tell where the voice was going and help them make the next leap.'"

These resources ensure valuable learning experiences for UW students preparing to become professional singers. Yes, this is a supportive and inspiring atmosphere! Just what a student needs, and should expect.

And we audience members are fortunate to be able to follow the progress of our voice and opera students in the varied repertoire they present in Music Hall. To ensure the program's continued vitality, given the current difficult financial times at the university, **we ask you to be a strong "Prop" through your membership and financial support in the coming year.**

Summer News from Our Students

Tenor **Joshua Sanders** is a studio Artist at Wolf Trap Opera, a splendid opportunity to sing opera and learn the classical song literature. Josh is looking forward to taking on the title role of Albert Herring soon (the role is double-cast, shared with **Will Ottow**).

Summer Treat: **Caitlin Ruby Miller** sings Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with MAYCO, 7:30 p.m. on August 22, Music Hall. Also on the program: Shostakovitch No. 9 and *Magic Flute* Overture, **Mikko Utevsy** conducting. Not to be missed!

More Summer News

The **Fall Alumni Showcase** concert will feature a variety of regionally local UW grads who are representing UW through their music making, including soprano **Jamie-Rose Guarrine** and percussionist **Jamie Ryan**. Sunday, September 21 at 1:30 pm, Morphy Recital Hall.

The **UW Symphony Orchestra's opening concert** will include *Rückert-Lieder* by Gustav Mahler featuring soprano soloist Elizabeth Hagedorn. In 24 years as an opera singer in Europe, Elizabeth Hagedorn performed over 50 leading roles, from the lyric-coloratura (Violetta, Konstanze, Elvira), and developing through the heavier lyric roles (Mimi, Rusalka, Suor Angelica, *Don Carlo* Elisabetta) to jugendlich-dramatic repertoire (Salome, Ariadne, Elsa, *Wozzeck* Marie). The concert also includes Symphony No. 1 (Spring Symphony) of Robert Schumann. James Smith, Conductor. Sunday, September 28 at 2 pm.

Fresco Opera Theatre continues its "Opera Unplugged" series of concerts at the Capital Square Farmers Market on Saturdays, August 30 and September 6 (10:00–11:15 am, at Grace Church). September 26–27, Fresco Opera Theatre joins "Overture Center Concerts"—see FrescoOperaTheatre.com.

Alumni News: Nate Stampley's year-long national tour in "The Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*" ended on a high note last month in Charlotte, grossing over \$1 million dollars. Nate picked up some splendid reviews for this Broadway version of the opera, e.g., "Alicia Hall Moran's Bess and Nathan Stampley's Porgy have rich, full voices that turn songs like "Bess, You Is My Woman Now" and Stampley's "I'm On My Way" finale into high opera." (*TribLIVE*, Pittsburgh)

Also in July, **Greg Schmidt** starred as the Duke of Mantua at the Crested Butte Festival's stagings of *Rigoletto*; **John Koch's** Midwest Institute of Opera produced *Carmen* in several versions, full-staged and not; and our well-remembered Don Giovanni, **Michael Roemer** (MM 2012), returned to Music Hall as a finalist in UW's Handel Aria Competition. More later on these busy alums!

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