

L'amico Fritz, Music by Pietro Mascagni

Libretto by Nikola Daspuro, based on the novel *L'ami Fritz* by Emile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrian

University Opera production directed by William Farlow

UW Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Smith



University Opera presents Mascagni's delightful *L'amico Fritz*

As Jane Austen so astutely observed, it is evident that every young man with a good income must be in need of a wife. The accomplishing of that union, usually against the young man's better judgment, has provided the grist for dozens of romantic novels, plays and short stories. And such is the case with "L'Amico Fritz," an opera of gentle persuasion, quiet good humor, mellow charm and simplicity ..., it is filled with lovely arias and duets, particularly the oft-excerpted Cherry Duet. Good songs for every principal character make this an excellent choice for [a University production].

-Deseret News, Utah

The cast and crew of University Opera look forward to presenting *L'amico Fritz*, a beautiful but rarely performed opera by Pietro Mascagni, as their spring production. Sung in Italian with English surtitles by Christine Seitz, the work will receive three performances—Friday, March 15 at 7:30 p.m., Sunday, March 17 at 3:00 p.m. and Tuesday, March 19 at 7:30 p.m. All shows will be presented at the Carol Rennebohm Auditorium in Music Hall on the UW campus.

"I am so honored to be directing this, my second production of *L'amico Fritz*," says director **William Farlow**. "It is a vibrant, youthful love story. My favorite line in the opera comes in Act 1: 'May your life be eternal spring.'" The opera takes place in the idyllic pastoral setting of Alsace-Lorraine, and Farlow has elected to set it in 1891, the year the opera premiered.

Farlow's casts include undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Music, supported by the **UW Symphony Orchestra** under the direction of conductor **James Smith**. Most roles are multiple cast for this opera. The title role of wealthy landowner Fritz will be shared by **Alex Gmeinder** (March 15 and 19) and **Aldo Perrelli** (March 17). **Cassie Glaeser** (March 15) and **Shannon Prickett** (March 17 and 19) will sing opposite them as Suzel, the peasant girl Fritz comes to love. The rabbi David, Fritz's matchmaking friend, will be sung by **Jordan Wilson** at all three performances. **Bethany Hickman** (March 15) and **Lindsay Metzger** (March 17 and 19) will share the role of Beppe, a gypsy. **Erik Larson** in the role of Hanezò, **Josh Sanders** as Federico, and **CatieLeigh Laszewski** as Caterina complete the cast.

Production staff includes costume designers **Sydney Krieger** and **Hyewon Park**, technical director/set designer **Greg Silver**, lighting designer **Steven M. Peterson**, scenic artist/set designer **Liz Rathke**, guest vocal coach **Thomas Kasdorf** and chorus master **Susan Goeres**. This production

is made possible by gifts from Kathleen Hornemann (in loving memory of Ulfert) and an anonymous donor, as well as additional funding from Opera Props.

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 (608) 265-ARTS and online at arts.wisc.edu/. Tickets may also be purchased in person at the Vilas Hall Box Office, Monday-Friday, 11:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Advance ticket purchase is recommended; if unsold tickets remain, they may be purchased at the door beginning one hour before the performance. You can pre-order a campus parking permit online at arts.wisc.edu/map or call (608) 265-ARTS (3 days or more in advance).

Listen to Mascagni's music for *L'amico Fritz*: Go to uwOperaProps.org for key YouTube links.

Mark your calendar: our next **Opera Workshop** program is slated for Wednesday, April 24 at 7:30 in Music Hall. The scenes offered will be chosen from *Così fan tutte* (Act II), *La clemenza di Tito* (Act II), *Idomeneo* (Act II), *Hansel and Gretel* (Act I), *Pearl Fishers* (Act II).

Singers featured will be Ariana Douglas, Brenna Dudley, Lydia Eiche, Daniel Lopez, Jenny DeMain, CatieLeigh Laszewski, Josh Sanders, Anna Whiteway, William Ottow, Erik Larson, Tia Cleveland, Kirsten Larson, Caitlin Miller.

Directors are Mimmi Fulmer, William Farlow, Aldo Perrelli.

Pianists are Susan Goeres, Thomas Kasdorf, Adam Kluck.

Madison Opera Trips bus excursions to Lyric Opera's current season ends with

March 26 – *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Andre Previn).

May 8 – *Oklahoma!* (matinee, Rodgers & Hammerstein)

For information on these bus trips to Chicago, call Fern Lawrence at (608) 238-1529 or email via FernLawrence@hotmail.com

Opera Props' joint excursion with Madison Opera Trips, to Santa Fe Opera during August 6 - 11, is now fully subscribed. We'll be seeing *La traviata* with UW graduate Brenda Rae [Klinkert] as Violetta, and several other operas during those days.

Opera Props News is published each semester for the members of UW Opera Props.

Editorial Committee: Charles Anderson, Kristine Bengtson, Helen Schmedeman, Dan Shea.

Opera Props website: uwOperaProps.org

Rustic Matchmaking

by Charles Anderson

Pietro Mascagni's first opera, *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890) scored an immediate success, and soon was being performed in every major house around the world. With an abundance of melody, both lyric and dramatic, this enduringly popular work presents a highly concise, naturalistic treatment of some (unabashedly sensational) incidents involving ordinary people. It was viewed as inaugurating a new style in Italian opera, *verismo*, of which Puccini would eventually become the primary exponent - beginning with *Manon Lescaut* (1893). Outliving Puccini by more than twenty years, Mascagni composed a total of fifteen operas, altogether exhibiting a considerable diversity of themes and styles. Several of them have been enthusiastically revived in recent years. This coming September the Berlin Opera will offer *L'amico Fritz* with the husband and wife team of Alagna and Gheorghiu. The extent to which Mascagni's memory lives on may be gauged by perusing the numerous entries logged at the website Mascagni.org.

In a setting far from the sun-scorched square of a remote Sicilian village, Mascagni's second opera was not another exploration of the extremes of human passions and behavior of the type he ironically labeled "Rustic Chivalry." Instead, *L'amico Fritz* (1891) is a gentle tale dealing with "Rustic Matchmaking" in a rural Alsatian community, circa 1890. The libretto of *L'amico Fritz* (by N. Daspuro) was based on a play (1876), derived from an earlier novel (1864), both coauthored by E. Erckmann and A. Chatrian, two Frenchmen who were a prolific source of all types of popular fiction during the second half of the 19th century.

The Plot of the Opera

The opera begins at the house of the titular character, Fritz Kobus. He is a wealthy landowner, well known as a "friend" to all in the community for his unfailing good nature and willingness to help out with loans on easy terms

or even outright gifts. He is a benefactor of orphans (who appear during the finale of Act I), and he readily welcomes the presence of gypsies in the vicinity. One of them, Beppe, shows gratitude by performing at a party assembled to celebrate Fritz's fortieth birthday. Also attending are his friends Hanezò, Federico and Rabbi David, who is concerned that Fritz appears headed toward confirmed bachelorhood. When Fritz's housekeeper, Caterina, brings in Suzel, the daughter of one of Fritz's tenants, David notes that she has blossomed into a young woman ripe for marriage. After further conversation touching on matrimony the rabbi proposes a wager to which the skeptical Fritz responds that if, after all, he ends up married to anyone, he will give his best vineyard to David.

In the second act the scene shifts to one of Fritz's orchards, where he encounters Suzel picking cherries. They soon join in music known as the "Cherry Duet," probably the most frequently excerpted piece from the opera. At this point Fritz clearly begins to have second thoughts about remaining single, but still requires some prodding, which Rabbi David supplies by pretending that he has found a husband for Suzel. Upset by this (mis)information, Fritz abruptly departs, leaving Suzel sad and bewildered, for the rabbi had convinced her of the eligibility of Fritz by reference to the Biblical story of Isaac and Rachel.

The third act, back at Fritz's house, opens with one of those tuneful intermezzos which were to become a staple feature of *verismo* opera. After commiserating with Beppe on the subject of unrequited love, Fritz delivers an impassioned aria reflecting his belated realization of the power of his feelings for Suzel. Then Rabbi David comes in and continues the subterfuge by telling Fritz that his consent is required before Suzel can be married. Fritz angrily departs, then returns to find that Suzel, still bewildered, has arrived. She begs him to save her from an unwanted marriage. Eventually the truth comes out, Fritz and Suzel agree to be married, so Rabbi David wins the vineyard, but magnanimously confers it on Suzel as a wedding present.

Continued over

**Come join us for Dinner at the University Club – Friday, March 15,
before meeting Rabbi David and his friends at the opera.**

A social hour: cash bar and fellowship starts at **5:00** till 5:45.

Then, from **5:45 - 7:10** in the Wayside Dining Room, we'll share a cozy meal with bows to the Jewish heritage of some of our characters.

Our Program: The Beppe for Sunday's matinee performance, Lindsay Metzger, will join us for the evening and give us her impressions of the opera.

The Menu, with choice of entrée

Bread baskets with Challah and Jewish Rye.

Salad course – Mixed greens with dried Door County cherries, mandarin orange slices, walnuts and chèvre.

Entree 1 – Chicken Breast in Herbes de Provence served over traditional savory noodle Kugel,

OR a Vegetarian Option:

Entree 2 – Grilled Portobello Mushroom Cap marinated and stuffed with Boursin Basil whipped cheese and microgreens, served over savory noodle Kugel.

Dessert: “Cherry Duet,” cherry mascarpone-stuffed Crepes topped with Cherries Jubilee flambéed tableside. Coffee or tea included.

This meal is **\$27 inclusive**. Wine can be purchased at the front desk.

The University Club is located at 803 State Street mall.

Please send us your list of names of those attending, their entrée choices, and a check for your group (\$27 per person, gratuities included).

Checks should be payable to the “UW Opera Props,” please mail by **March 9** to

Dan Shea, 3337 Conservancy Lane, Middleton 53562

Questions? Call Dan at (608) 836-6911 or Peg Wallace at 233-1304.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF OPERA PROPS

Dear music friend,

We can justifiably feel great pride in the quality of our student singers in the University's Opera program. While they are here on campus developing as singing actors, we delight in their talent and evident progress. When they graduate and continue on toward careers in education or other service, or a combination of those activities with performance careers, we are glad to follow their further development.

What seems new in the Madison area is the range of ways we can choose to keep up with our student singers' careers. Over the last two years, I've been delighted to attend the monthly meetings of the **Madison Area Opera Singers Workshop** at Capital Lake Retirement Community auditorium. The programs there have been organized (with Melanie Cain's leadership) to allow post-graduate singers to get some performance practice followed by instruction in a master-class environment. All with an eye to keeping the actual evening lively and entertaining for the audience: residents at Capital Lakes, friends of the singers, and interested outside observers – often including several Opera Props members. **The next meeting is scheduled for April 12**, consider joining us at 7:00 PM.

Another way for a singer to get useful experience is via vocal competitions, and the past few years some of us have enjoyed traveling to Brookfield in October for the Metropolitan Opera regional auditions. Now comes word of a **Handel Aria Competition** right here in Madison, as part of our summer Early Music Festival! This is an idea of longtime Opera Props members Dean and Carol Schroeder, a wonderful gift to the community that meshes well with Bill Farlow's plans for next season's UW operas: Handel's *Ariodante* (1735) and Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédicte* (1862). Since opera companies everywhere are increasingly interested in Baroque opera (recall Madison Opera's success with last January's *Acis and Galatea*), this vocal competition surely will help enrich our students' experience with that repertoire.

All this is happening at a moment of transition for UW's Opera program, with the retirement in June 2014 of Director Bill Farlow. This program has competed wonderfully on the strength of its past and current faculty in the Voice area, but recent cuts in support make recruitment of the best talent difficult. And a new candidate for Bill's position will marvel at the lack of funding for basic production costs, for example!

The needs are many, and Opera Props does provide an important element of support: During the current season, we've contributed over \$35,000 for student awards, surtitles, and production costs – more than triple the level of just a few years ago. Your generous support of the Opera and Voice programs, either via Props or the UW Foundation (contact Bill or Associate Director Mimmi Fulmer), is urgently needed and greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Dan Shea

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The Real Divas of Dane County, by Fresco Opera Theatre

Overture Center Playhouse, March 22-23 at 8:00, March 24 at 2:00

This spring's production will showcase some of our favorite local singers in favorite arias and in their usual inventive way: There's never a dull moment, as Kassy Coleman, Jessica Timman, Melanie Cain, Heath Rush, and ten others bring us great moments from opera, in Fresco Opera's usual avant-garde style, directed by Jess Salek and Frank and Melanie Cain.

For more information and to order tickets, see

<http://overturecenter.com/production/the-real-divas-of-dane-county>

Collins Fellowship Winners to present concert on Sunday, April 21,

in Music Hall at 2:30.

Soprano Emily Birsan, mezzo-soprano Jamie Van Eyck, baritone John Arnold, and pianist Kirsten Ihde all won Collins Fellowships for their studies at our School of Music. Now, to help celebrate the establishment of these prestigious awards, our artists have agreed to present a free concert together. Last October, well-remembered soprano Jamie-Rose Guarrine and pianist Scott Gendel, both past Collins Fellowship winners, gave a delightful concert as part of the same celebration.

Currently part of Lyric Opera's Ryan Opera Center, Emily Birsan is based in Chicago and able to return occasionally to the Madison area. Last December she appeared with the Middleton Community Orchestra, presenting four gems of the soprano literature: "Ach, ich liebte" from Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, "Musetta's Waltz" from Puccini's *La Bohème*, "Vilja" from Lehar's *Merry Widow*, and "Ah! Fors'è lui ... Sempre libera" from Verdi's *La traviata*.

Her husband Codrut returns to our area regularly too, with his Candid Concert Opera:

Chicago's Candid Concert Opera to present *The Magic Flute*,

at the Edgerton Performing Arts Center, May 11 at 7:30.

Yes, CCO belongs to the world now and no longer is Madison's alone. When Codrut Birsan went to Chicago, the musicians he had access to changed; but we were lucky last December to get a performance here of CCO's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, done the previous week in Chicago. The cast and orchestra were superb and the performance amounted to one of our best operatic experiences of the year. This spring Codrut is preparing a version of Mozart's *Magic Flute* in the same concert style, and two performances will be given in Wisconsin: May 10 at the Schauer Arts Center in Hartford, and the following evening at Edgerton's PAC, sponsored by the Wartmann Artist Series. We recommend the short trip down I-90 to Edgerton! For tickets, call (608)561-6093.

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One anonymous member, Charles & Mary Anderson, Kathleen Hornemann, The John and Carolyn Peterson Family Charitable Foundation.

**Please join us to help support the students in UW's Opera program
with a contribution to UW Opera Props**

I wish to join, or renew, my Opera Props membership, for 2012-2013 at the following level:

____ Individual @ \$25 ____ Sustaining @ \$150
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I am already a 2012-2013 Props member, but wish to *make an additional contribution* of
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* *Please make your membership check payable to UW Opera Props.* Opera Props' fiscal year runs from June 1, 2012 through May 31, 2013. Contributors will be acknowledged in the Opera Props newsletter, unless otherwise requested. Your support of the UW Opera Program is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Checks should be sent to: Peg Wallace, 2220 Chamberlain Ave., Madison, WI 53726.
Questions? Call Peg at (608) 233-1304.

Madison Opera's take on *Don Giovanni* coming up, April 26 & 28

Our University Opera did a superb take on Mozart's opera just a year ago, Michael Roemer's Don was convincing dramatically and superbly sung! But let's see what the folks down the street can do with this masterpiece, so many takes on this classic tale are possible. The casting is especially interesting: Kelly Markgraf will sing Madison Opera's Don; some of us heard him back in 2009 when he was Masetto for the NY City Opera, and we wished then we could have heard him in the title role! Our wishes are about to be answered. And he's a Wisconsinite, hailing from Cedarburg.

Here in Madison, April's Masetto will be enacted by John Arnold, who was our Leporello a year ago. Tenor Wesley Rogers, who will sing Don Ottavio, is getting fine reviews too, especially as a Mozartian. We remember Elizabeth Caballero well, especially for her sensational Violetta recently in Madison, she'll be April's Donna Anna. The whole cast looks excellent, recommended!