

FRIENDS OF OPERA

UNIVERSITY OF
NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

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Dr. Sergio H. Ruiz is the Director of the Glenn Korff School of Music and Professor of Music at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

He holds degrees from Santa Clara University (BA), Cleveland Institute of Music (MM), and Rice University (DMA). He has previously served at Georgia College & State University, Sam Houston State University, and Sul Ross State University.

An International Steinway artist Ruiz has delighted audiences throughout the world. His performances on Spanish-speaking radio broadcasts have aired throughout South and Central America. Most recently, he performed concerts in México, Belgium, Germany, Colombia, Czech Republic, Bolivia, and Ecuador, and he has appeared live on KUHF 88.7, *The Front Row* and on WGTE FM: *Live from FM 91*. Dr. Ruiz studied piano in Barcelona, Spain under the tutelage of the late, legendary pianist Alicia de Larrocha. Dr. Ruiz was a member of the Hemingway Trio, a group dedicated to commissioning and performing works by American composers. They returned from a successful tour of Germany and Belgium in Summer 2015. With recent performances at Interlochen Arts Camp, Dr. Ruiz was also the soloist for Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with jazz orchestra, and he also completed a recording project of the

chamber music of Bolivian composer Gustavo Navarre (1931-2006). Dr. Ruiz also enjoys interdisciplinary performances. He has performed in various projects with modern dancers. He also performed in a more recent project with a piano quintet arrangement of Spanish composer Manuel Da Falla's (1876-1946), *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, which included the poetry of Spanish poet Jorge Guillén (1893-1984), and newly-created drawings by American artist Ken Procter.

In demand as an adjudicator, lecturer, and master teacher, Dr. Ruiz balances his performance calendar with being a dedicated teacher. He has judged several piano competitions and festivals in the U.S. and South America. In 2009, he won the Texas Music Teachers Association Collegiate Teacher of the Year. In 2011, he won the Faculty Excellence in Service Award. He also served as Artistic Director of a Youth Music program in León, México and is summer faculty at Interlochen Arts Camp since 2008. Dr. Ruiz was the Creator and Artistic Director of a Latin American Arts and Humanities Festival—*Festival (de) Inspiración*.



Robert Owen's Collection

The complete collection of works by composer Robert Owens is now housed in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Music Library thanks to Dr. Reimer's decade-long friendship and collaboration with Mr. Owens. Friends of Opera scholarship recipient, Krista Benesch, has taken on the task of cataloging the collection. She has been awarded the competitive UCARE research grant for her hard work on this project. Amongst Owens' many works are two unfinished operas in addition to an opera that was premiered at UNL in 2015 with the support of the Friends of Opera. Some of the works being catalogued have not yet been published. We hope the cataloging process will make more of Owens' works available for others to enjoy for years to come.

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To the UNL Friends of Opera Members,

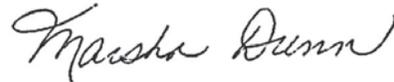
This newsletter is going out to all our FOO members to thank you for your commitment to our wonderful opera students. In this letter you will see what our current and alumni are doing to put UNL opera program on the map. We feel we have the best students who shine in so many areas.

Our new leadership in Dr. Sergio Ruiz, the director of Glenn Korff School of music has been a great transition for the school. You will read about all his accomplishments and background. Hopefully you will get a chance to meet him in person. A true gem!

This is my sixth and final year serving on this wonderful board of directors. I have been very privileged to serve as President the past two years. Friends of Opera will remain one of my great passions and I will continue to support this organization by being a member and going to the operas and following the students that UNL produces.

Enjoy reading this newsletter and I hope to see you at the Opera in February!

Cheers,



Marsha Dunn

Regional NATS Awards

Congratulations to the West Central National Association of the Teachers of Singing (NATS) Student Auditions. The competition was held in Greeley, CO in November. The winners are listed by category:

First Year Men

Honorable Mention:
Matthew Harroun

Sophomore Men

1. Matthew Carter
4. Dakota Mathew
5. Ryan Savage

Sophomore Women

3. Victoria Handford
- Semi-finalists: Mary Dowd, Skyler Dykes, Abby Kurth, Susan Twiehaus

Senior Women

5. Jeannie Hageman

Graduate Women

2. Patty Kramer

Nontraditional Students

3. Genevieve Cardos

First Year & Sophomore Men in Musical Theatre

1. Matthew Carter
 2. Ryan Savage
 4. Dakota Mathew
- Semi-finalist: Sam Galligan

Junior & Senior Women in Musical Theatre

1. Victoria Handford
 4. Susan Twiehaus
 5. Skyler Dykes
- Semi-finalists: Michelle Ingle, Abby Kurth

Junior & Senior Men in Musical Theatre

2. Logan Langholdt
- Semi-finalist: Braxton Carr

Opera Scenes

Director of Opera Scenes Dr. Jamie Reimer is excited to announce "Family Matters" as the theme for this spring's production. A cast of both graduate and undergraduate singers will perform audience favorites including the stunning sextet, "Riconosci in questo amplesso" from Mozart's La nozze di Figaro. Dr. Jamie Reimer, Conductor David Galant, and Vocal Coach/Pianist Professor Donna Harler-Smith will collaborate with the students to develop their characters and perform their music at the highest standard. Don't forget to mark your calendars for 4:00 in the afternoon, Wednesday April 25, 2018 for your last chance to hear the beauty of opera during UNL Opera's 2017-2018 season.



UNL Students and Faculty at Regional NATS

What to do with *Così*?

by William Shomos, UNL Director of Opera

Mozart's score and Da Ponte's libretto are fascinatingly vague and non-committal on the question of how the story turns out. Throughout the opera, Mozart's sublime music has an uncanny subjectivity open to interpretation, with much being left to the discretion of the performers and artistic team. Since Peter Sellars set his famous 1991 production in an American diner, the gloves have been off. Opera Omaha recently presented the story in an urban nightclub, while the Metropolitan Opera's new production features a Coney Island inspired carnival-esque environment of the 1950's. It seems any more that the most radical approach to *Così fan tutte* is a "traditional" period treatment.

The word "traditional" is problematic. I would argue that in live theatre nothing is "traditional" because you have living breathing performers communicating with an urgency that exists nowhere but in the present. But perhaps that's a conversation for another day.

When I met with scenic designer Lisa Haldeman, a very talented and creative 3rd year MFA student in the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film, I made up my mind to do more listening than talking. Having staged three full productions of *Così fan tutte*, along with many workshop and scenes presentations, I can claim to have

some experience with the opera. Lisa, on the other hand, had none. I was intrigued by what her fresh unencumbered perceptions might be and I readied myself to accept any concept she came up with. If Lisa wanted to design a lunar setting of *Così*, I was prepared to stage it on the moon!

What she came up with surprised me in a way that I had not anticipated. Lisa was inspired to set *Così* in its original late 18th century period...a "traditional" production (again, that word). Yet her design is unquestionably original and very beautiful. Picking up on the many references to breezes and winds in the score, the design is a flowing set with many curves and transparencies, exposing the vulnerability and the subject-to-the-breezes emotional shifts that permeate the story line. Perhaps this soft edged look also suggests the gentle wisdom in making allowances for the idiosyncrasies of our human condition? As we look around at our often angry world today, perhaps we can acknowledge our need for gentle forgiving connections. We may not be protected from life's fickle breezes, but at least there can be a comprehension of our shared humanity in the face of those winds. Call it a "traditional" production if you will, but Mozart remains as relevant as ever.



Metropolitan Opera Award

The Friends of Opera give an encouragement award at the annual Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. This year's award went to a former UNL student, Gretchen Pille. Congratulations Gretchen!

Gretchen Pille (FOO Encouragement Award Winner) and Marsha Dunn (FOO President)



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

Alumni News

Nathanial Sullivan placed first in the 2018 NATS National Music Theater Competition

Angela Gilbert placed fourth in the 2018 NATS National Music Theater Competition

Kayla Wilkins was a finalist in the 2018 NATS National Music Theater Competition

Emily Triebold is performing as an Apprentice Artist with Opera Iowa

Timothy Madden is performing as an Apprentice Artist with Opera Iowa

Jared Hiscock is currently singing with Opera for the Young in Madison, WI

Chris Maunu is a finalist for the 2018 Grammy Music Educator Award

Brian Jeffers won the 2018 Nebraska District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions

Visit our new website at friendsofopera.org and like our Facebook page Friends of Opera, University of Nebraska-Lincoln for the latest information, reminders of upcoming events, and memories from past performances!

Please join us
for the
**Friends of Opera
Scholarship
competition**
on April 8th
at 2:00 in
Westbrook 119.

Incoming
undergraduate
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