

## FROM YOUR EDITOR

The extraordinary time continues, and we have another unusual newsletter. We asked for your Glimmerglass memories, and in this issue we share the many wonderful responses. I hope they will remind you of all that Glimmerglass adds to your life.

Don't pass up the company's *Glimmerglass Glimpses*. They go live every Thursday at 5:30 pm and afterward are available on the company's website. And don't miss this year's Guild membership meeting; see below for more information.

Most importantly, what can you do to help the Guild promote and support the company? There's no better time than now to share this local resource with your friends and neighbors. If you haven't renewed your membership, now's a good time to see to that. And while you're there, how about giving the gift of membership to someone you know and love? It's a great way to promote the company!

KATE JOHNSON

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## MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Guild will hold its annual membership meeting on Sunday, September 20 at 2:00 pm. The meeting will be hosted on Zoom, with opportunity to participate from anywhere either with video via computer, tablet, or smart phone, or by a simple telephone call. Instructions will be shared by email and in the September newsletter.

We plan to make this an interesting and exciting meeting, with some guests who have been gracious enough to agree to participate. We hope you'll plan to join us!

Laura Tansey Wetzel

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## FABULOUS FACEMASKS

The Guild's mask project was an idea brought to the Board as a way to keep the Festival visually present in the community. Karin de Waal donated a large piece of

**Facemasks continued on page 2**

## GLIMMERGLASS MEMORIES

### COUNTERTENOR MAGIC

Hans and I have seen so many wonderful Glimmerglass performances, but one that always stands out is the 1987 production of Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. My very dear and beloved mother-in-law was visiting. As a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, she didn't watch TV, attend shows, or go to the movies. She had never attended an opera. But Hans gave up his ticket, and she went with me because she knew it meant a lot to me. Countertenor Michael Dash played Oberón. We were blown away. It was the first time I had ever heard a countertenor. The sound of that voice emanating from such a large, impressive figure was absolutely astonishing! I was hooked! That performance was followed by several other countertenors who graced the Glimmerglass stage, including Anthony Roth Constanzo and John Holiday. Fabulous!

KARIN DE WAAL

### A LIFE-CHANGING DISCOVERY

Even though opera has always been oxygen to me, I didn't discover Glimmerglass until the 1991 season, and it completely changed my life. I not only found a unique opera company but a part of New York State that I didn't know at all. Both were love at first sight. After several years of visiting, Paul and I left the metropolitan area and made Otsego County our home.

ABBY KREH GIBSON

### MEMORIES OF 1993'S WERTHER

Every time we enter the Woodcock Building for a Guild meeting, we gaze fondly at the large black and white photo of Massenet's *Werther*. Our then 14-year-old son, Brett (now 41 years old), was Max, one of the children of the Bailli. He was an excellent singer in the Oneonta Boy Choir at the time and was encouraged to audition for Glimmerglass Opera.

Brett has wonderful memories of bonding with the renowned director, Mark Lamos; Stewart Robertson, music director; and the noted cast members; and of the fact that he actually got paid! We were certainly proud of Brett's talents, as well as the fact that he was following in his dad's footsteps by being on the stage.

BILL AND CYNTHIA GOERTEMOELLER

### AN ANTIDOTE FOR AGING

In 1995 we hosted long-time friends and their two boys. In an effort to keep from waking the boys one afternoon, I tiptoed down the back stairs in my stocking feet, slipped, and fell. I bounced down the steps and bruised myself badly. Nothing was broken but I was shaken. That same afternoon, as we adults sat on the deck and watched the boys climb a tree, Michael slipped and fell, bouncing from limb to limb until he landed with a thud on the ground. We leapt up and he just stood up and said, "I'm OKAY, I'm okay."

The next day I was miserable from my fall. Bruised all over. Not comfortable sitting, standing, or lying down. Pain killers helped somewhat. Whatever

**Glimmerglass memories continued on page 3**

**The Guild of Glimmerglass Festival**  
 P.O. Box 491, Cooperstown, NY 13326  
[www.glimmerglassguild.org](http://www.glimmerglassguild.org)

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*News & Notes* is the bimonthly newsletter of  
**The Guild of Glimmerglass Festival**

Editor: Kate Johnson  
 652 Glimmerglen Road  
 Cooperstown, NY 13326  
 Phone: 607-547-7267  
 Email: [kate.gogf@gmail.com](mailto:kate.gogf@gmail.com)

**PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

Lately I have been remembering things my mother said. She told me the greatest pain in any significant loss is that everyone thinks it is better if they do not talk about it. Mom said it is so important to talk about things we planned and hoped for that do not come to pass. In this vein I want to thank the many Guild members who worked to prepare for the 2020 Festival season.

My first thank you goes to those who planned to travel to the Washington National Opera to see Glimmerglass’s production of *Blue*. Thank you also to Jean Seroka who planned a trip to Saratoga for Gilbert and Sullivan’s *Pirates of Penzance*.

Kathy Eisele and the Education/Community Engagement Committee planned a fabulous Talking Opera season and also A Day at the Festival in July. They are now working on some exciting new offerings. I appreciate their work deeply.

Cynthia and Bill Goertemoeller led the Hospitality Committee in organizing an exciting party for the Festival opening and were ready to deliver the annual Eat and Greet. Thank you!

Jane Grastorf and Laura Tansey Wetzel organized the captains for changeover meals on Saturdays in August. Thank you.

Janet Vinyard (Grounds) traded her trowel for a sewing machine to fashion masks to support the Festival. And we’ve pressed Walt Ashley into service selling those masks. Thank you both.

Christine Weiss (Fundraising), Carole Steigelman (Gala), and Karin deWaal (Gala Auction) have had to conjure new strategies in the wake of event cancellations; they have risen to the call and created the Un-gala Challenge. Thank you all.

Jane Grastorf, Kate Johnson, and Mary Brodzinsky keep information flowing to you, our members. Winnie Olsen keeps track of members; Rita Emanuel keeps track of volunteer hours. Joanne Tobey (Treasurer) cheerfully and deftly keeps our finances in check; we would be lost without her.

Brittany Lesavoy is so dedicated to making our efforts successful that I cannot imagine the Guild without her support.

And you—members of the Guild who renew your membership and give generously—are the heart of Glimmerglass.

You are my cherished Glimmerglass memories, and I thank you.

MARY MARGARET KUHN

**Facemasks continued from page 1**

music-themed French cotton fabric in beige, gold, and black. Janet Vinyard, who hated cutting into that great piece, lined the cone-shaped masks with a floral fabric in the Festival’s colors.

A second donated piece of fabric is a splendid hot red batik with musical notes splashed across it. This one, together with a fabric panel of stringed instruments, was donated by Elizabeth Polley who worked in the costume shop a few years back. The Guild logo is embroidered on the masks and they are looking sharp and ready. Keep your eyes out for them at the Cooperstown Farmers’ Market or contact Mary Margaret to buy yours!

PRICE \$10.00 Contact Mary Margaret Kuhn 607-547-6181

**Glimmerglass memories continued from page 1**

position I thought was comfortable only lasted five or ten minutes, then I had to change. Miserable.

We asked Michael “Are you sore from the fall yesterday?” And he said “What fall?” That’s when I knew I was no longer young. Not old, but no longer young.

The following evening we had tickets for *Tamerlano* at Glimmerglass. Friends had said “There’s not a lot of action... they mostly just stand and sing...great costumes...” Not being a total Glimmerglass devotee, I had my reservations. Although still thoroughly miserable and sore I agreed to go, with the understanding that I had a makeshift bed prepared in the back of our station wagon and while everyone else must indeed enjoy the performance, I might just slip out and wait comfortably in the car.

When the music started and the cast began singing I was enthralled. At the end of the first act I had a profound moment when I at once understood “This is what this is all about.” That music and those performers had taken me out of my pain and let me listen without awareness of my discomfort. I understood why gouty old monarchs commissioned composers to offer them textured, complex, and diverting entertainments. A beautiful moment I will never forget.

Thank you Glimmerglass.

FRANK FARMER

**TWO PERSPECTIVES ON AN OPENING NIGHT**

Glimmerglass is no stranger to power outages. Nearly every season since the house opened in 1987 has brought one or more, each with its own special twist. My favorite is the opening night of *Paul Bunyan*, on Saturday July 15, 1995. That date had been preceded by many days of intense heat and record humidity. Early that morning an extraordinarily intense storm, a derecho, with lightning, heavy rain, and winds of up to 100 miles an hour, developed in southern Canada, intensified in the Adirondacks, and came south.

The storm uprooted many trees in Springfield Center, came down the Lake Road, and did serious damage to the Opera House and its grounds. Electric power was out for miles around, but the opera company was promised all day long that it would soon be restored. The opera staff labored hard, retrieving benches from the pond, clearing tree debris, and repairing the big door on the set barn.

When the celebrity-filled audience assembled for the opening, there was still no power, hence no way the show could go on. After much consultation, the opening night patrons were treated to an outdoor evening of cabaret songs performed by Lauren Flanigan in the courtyard, with Stewart Robertson at the piano.

The power was restored overnight. The curtain rose on *Paul Bunyan* at 10:30 am on Sunday, to a wildly enthusiastic, cheering audience.

BARBARA H. MULHERN

Yes, it was an unforgettable moment for all of us. A depressing

night that turned into one of the most wonderful mornings of my professional life.

I awoke late that Saturday morning in the cottage where the company had billeted me, and noticed twigs jammed into the screen doors, lots of water droplets, and dazzling sunlight. The deck was littered with branches and leaves. Clearly I’d slept through one helluva storm. Then the phone rang: the doors had been torn from the scene shop and there was no electricity, but the staff was hoping to get it restored by curtain time. The day was spent on tenterhooks, receiving discouraging updates. Whole communities had lost power and there was storm damage everywhere—so what hope for an opera house opening night?

Conductor Stewart Robertson, the design team, the cast, and I got more depressed as time passed. The evening hobbled along with my dear chum Lauren providing much-needed musical rescue, complemented by, as I recall, free champagne. Quite late, Paul Kellogg announced that the show would go on the next morning. We all went to bed feeling as down in the dumps as you can imagine, because we felt we had something pretty special with our production of this rarely performed piece, and the company buzz during dress rehearsals had been so vibrant and positive.

The new curtain time arrived: the house was full and the performance was completely enchanting and perfectly executed, from the opening tableau of choristers in their blue rocking chairs, playing trees, to the final moment (suggested by Barbara, when none of us could figure out what our last image should be) when the chorus laid all the Christmas trees down in a sad pile.

I had told the disgruntled team we would not appear for the curtain calls. But the performance was so ebullient, the standing ovation so immediate, and the cheers for the cast so loud, that I raced around the house tapping each one on the shoulder, and we hurried onstage for more cheers and hugs with a happy, exhausted, excited cast. The fact that this sweet, heartfelt, and songful opera was receiving its opening by Otsego Lake on a bright sunny morning, instead of at night, seemed somehow completely appropriate.

We all went out, friends, lovers, spouses, and guests in tow, to a restaurant on the glittering lake for a vinous lunch filled with relieved happiness. The gestation of the production, with designers Paul Steinberg, Constance Hoffmann, and Robert Wierzel, was one of the happiest of my life, and rehearsals with the principals and chorus under Stewart’s guidance and collaboration proved a similar larky joy.

But that darn storm...!

MARK LAMOS, Director for *Paul Bunyan*

**AN UNFORGETTABLE EAT AND GREET**

It was 2012, the first year Eric Owens was at the Festival. The Education Committee had sponsored a limerick contest and I had entered a limerick about Eric. I didn’t know much about him beyond the fact that he was an excellent artist, with a great

*Glimmerglass memories continued on page 4*

**Glimmerglass memories continued from page 3**  
voice and acting ability.

At the Eat and Greet, I was going back and forth to the kitchen making sure the buffet tables were stocked, doing the usual Guild member routine. I heard a lot of laughter and talk from the tables where the cast members, crew, administration, and orchestra were enjoying their meals, but didn't really know what it was about. My husband later said to me, "They read your limerick and did you see Eric Owens? He was so excited!"

At the opening night party for *Lost in the Stars*, Guild president Tom Simpson arranged for me to give Eric a copy of the limerick. I was overwhelmed to be face to face with such an amazing person. Plus I got a hug!!

I am so happy Eric has become such an important part of the Glimmerglass Festival family. His warmth and generosity are as great a contribution as his amazing talent.

MARY BRODZINSKY

### PASSIONS

Among the many wondrous Glimmerglass productions I have attended, if I had to choose, the most memorable would be *Passions* in 2013. Initially, the pairing of these two one-act works—Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, an 18th century religious piece, and David Lang's 2007 opera *The Little Match Girl*, based on Hans Christian Anderson's short story—might seem a startling juxtaposition. But their unifying theme, the universality of suffering (passion), deepened the emotional impact of each work.

I recall most vividly the opening tableau of *Stabat Mater*, with the grieving Mary kneeling silently and motionlessly at the base of a cross. Pergolesi's lush and moving orchestral music, together with the subdued lighting and spare but evocative set, created a reverential mood. Dancers appeared and took up the mother's long veil which became an integral part of the modern choreography. Throughout the piece the singers (the marvelous countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo and soprano Nadine Sierra) interacted with the dancers.

Where *Stabat Mater* conveyed its meaning by suggestion, *The Little Match Girl*, with its more elaborate stage set, costumes, and children's chorus, is a narrative opera. Apart from the heartrending story itself, what I remember most clearly is the truly impressive talents of the children. Lang's music, often very lovely, was surely challenging—it was a challenge that the children met magnificently.

WINNIE OLSEN

### A RELOCATION DECISION

In 2017 my husband and I were deciding whether we should relocate to Cooperstown so that he could take a job at Bassett. I was particularly worried because I was going to retire and wanted to be sure I could access the arts and culture that I had so looked forward to. Our realtor took me to Glimmerglass Opera to visit with some of the staff including Abby, who

## THE GUILD OF Glimmerglass FESTIVAL

*News & Notes*

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gave me a personal tour. I was awed by the facility, the grounds, the history, and all the folks I met. I never expected to see anything like this in upstate NY. We stayed for the weekend and saw *Oklahoma*. It was amazing and added so much to our visit, created a new expectation, and contributed to our decision to come to Cooperstown. I decided right away to become involved and shortly after we moved here I joined the Guild. What a special place and special people. I know it will return in all its glory!

LAURA TANSEY WETZEL

### A FAMILY TRADITION CONTINUES

My parents, Elliot and Florence Helfand, began attending staged performances held in the Cooperstown High School auditorium. My father proudly reported that he cast the first vote to approve a million dollar bank loan toward the building of the Glimmerglass Opera House, assuring his fellow board members that he had no doubt it was secure.

Mom passed away in 1995, and Dad remarried. He and my new mom, Marty, subscribed to Glimmerglass each season until he was no longer able to travel. They enjoyed every staged production offered. Sadly, Dad passed away on July 28, 2019, at age 100. However, our family tradition will continue.

It is unfortunate that the 2020 performance season was cancelled, but it was a necessary decision. And with optimism we look forward to live performances returning in the 2021 season.

MARSHA RUBENSTEIN