



LIVE FROM THE MADISON OPERA CENTER

Jeni Houser, soprano
David Blalock, tenor
Scott Gendel, composer and piano

September 26, 2020

SPONSORED BY

Bert & Diane Adams
Martha & Charles Casey
Thomas Terry



HURLEY BURISH, S.C.

ATTORNEYS



WISCONSIN **arts** BOARD
Creativity. Culture. Community. Commerce.

THE PROGRAM

Falstaff

by Giuseppe Verdi

premiere: February 9, 1893, Milan

Dal labbro il canto estasiato vola

Sul fil d'un soffio etesio

~

Keep Moving

by Scott Gendel; text by Maggie Smith

commissioned by Madison Opera for Jeni Houser and David Blalock

premiere: September 26, 2020, Madison

Fuel

The Center That Holds

Among Trees

Don't Be Ashamed

Let Light In

The Mess is Where the Magic Lives

Many Lives

Eyes Ahead

~

The Pirates of Penzance

by W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan

premiere: December 31, 1879, New York City

Oh, Is There Not One Maiden Breast

Poor Wandering One

Stay, Frederic, Stay... Ah, Leave Me Not to Pine

~

American Folk Songs

How Can I Keep from Singing?

by Robert Lowry (1826-99)

arranged by David von Kampen

new lyrics by Gordon MacDonald, Jr.

Gentle Words

by Sister Polly Rupe (c.1867)

arranged by Scott Gendel

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Jeni Houser, soprano



Opera News lauds Jeni Houser's performances as "commanding and duplicitous, yet also vulnerable. She has a bright future above the staff." In the 2019-20 season, she made debuts with the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, and Dallas Opera in her sought-after portrayal of the Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*; she also sang the title role in *The Golden Cockerel* at Dallas Opera. The previous season, she debuted with the Vienna State Opera as Frantzi in the world premiere of Staud's *Die Weiden* and subsequently joined the company for productions of *The Magic Flute* and Trojahn's *Orest*. She also joined Kentucky Opera as the Queen of the Night and Fort Worth Opera to create the role of Viv in Peters' *Companionship*. In the current season, Jeni is scheduled to make debuts with Seattle Opera as the Controller in Dove's *Flight* and with New Orleans Opera as the Queen of the Night, as well as return to Virginia Opera as Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

A native of Stoughton, Wisconsin, Jeni made her Madison Opera debut as a Studio Artist in the 2012-13 season, and has returned regularly since, most recently for *Opera in the Park 2019*. She has sung Anne Eggerman in *A Little Night Music*, Olympia in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Johanna in *Sweeney Todd*, and Amy in *Little Women* with the company, and was slated to return as Eurydice in *Orpheus in the Underworld* in April 2020, playing opposite her husband, tenor David Blalock.

Jeni recently made company debuts with Austin Opera as Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Central City Opera as the Queen of the Night. For Minnesota Opera, she sang Zerbinetta, the Queen of the Night, Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, the Charmeuse in *Thaïs*, and Mrs. Grady in the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *The Shining*. She joined Cincinnati Opera as the Queen of the Night and Lyric Opera of Chicago for its production of the same opera. She has sung Johanna in *Sweeney Todd* with both Mill City Summer Opera and Baltimore Concert Opera; Susanna in Portugal's *The Marriage of Figaro* with On Site Opera; and Cecily in Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *The Importance of Being Earnest* with Odyssey Opera. On the concert stage, she has sung Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Madison Symphony, Las Vegas Philharmonic, and Atlanta Ballet; and Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Haydn's *Creation*, and Mozart's *Requiem* with Abendmusik: Lincoln (Nebraska).

During two summers with the Glimmerglass Festival, Jeni sang the Queen of the Night in the young artist performance of *The Magic Flute* and Najade in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, in addition to covering Cunegonde in *Candide*. She joined Lyric Opera of Chicago's Lyric Unlimited for *The Magic Victrola*, and sang Josephine in *H.M.S. Pinafore* with Opera Saratoga, Frasquita in *Carmen* with Virginia Opera, and Najade in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Fort Worth Opera and Berkshire Opera.

She holds degrees from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Lawrence University.

David Blalock, tenor



American tenor David Blalock is becoming widely known for his beautiful lyric voice and varied repertoire. In the 2019-20 season, he made his debut with the Metropolitan Opera as Pong in *Turandot* and joined Pensacola Opera to sing Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*. David also made his debut with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra for *Messiah*, and joined the Firelands Symphony Orchestra for a concert of Mozart, Puccini, and Verdi. Upcoming engagements include a return to Virginia Opera as Frederic in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

David made his Madison Opera debut as Jaquino in *Fidelio* in 2015, returned for *Opera in the Park 2019*, and was slated to sing Orpheus in *Orpheus in the Underworld* in April 2020. A native of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, he now lives in Stoughton, Wisconsin, with his wife, soprano Jeni Houser.

He began the 2018-19 season as Pelléas in *Pelléas et Mélisande* with West Edge Opera, followed by Sam Kaplan in *Street Scene* with Virginia Opera; Alfredo in *La Traviata* with Arizona Opera; Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore* with Piedmont Opera; Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* with the Duluth Symphony, and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* with Opera Hong Kong.

Highlights of the 2017-18 season included a debut with Opera San Jose as Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, a concert of arias and opera highlights with the San Francisco Symphony, a role debut as the title character in *La Clemenza di Tito* with the Maryland Opera Studio, a return to Virginia Opera as Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Messiah* with Fairbanks Symphony Orchestra and Virginia Symphony.

Performances in the 2016-17 season included his debut with Washington National Opera as the Ring Announcer in *Champion*; Rodrigo in *Otello* with the Minnesota Orchestra; Nikolaus Sprink in *Silent Night* with Atlanta Opera; Rodolfo in *La Bohème* with the Greater Bridgeport Symphony; the Second Jew in *Salome* with Minnesota Opera; and Count Almaviva in the North American premiere of Portugal's *The Marriage of Figaro* with On Site Opera.

David spent the summer of 2015 as Ricky in the world premiere of Jeremy Howard Beck's *The Long Walk* at Opera Saratoga. His busy 2015-16 season included both Handel's *Messiah* and Pong (*Turandot*) with the Pacific Symphony; Toby in *Sweeney Todd* with Mill City Summer Opera; a Viennese Operetta concert with the Richmond Symphony; Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* at UN Assembly Hall with the Shanghai Symphony; *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well in Paris* with Performance Santa Fe; and a return to Virginia Opera as the Steersman in *The Flying Dutchman*.

Scott Gendel, composer and pianist



Scott Gendel is a composer, vocal coach, pianist, theatrical music director, singer, keyboardist, composition instructor, producer, songwriter, and general musical polymath living in the Madison, Wisconsin area. As a composer, his music has a wide-ranging scope, but Scott is particularly fond of all things vocal and the artistry of the human voice in all its forms, including opera, art song, choral music, musical theatre, folk song, rock albums, and much more. As a performing musician, Scott collaborates on vocal and instrumental recitals around the country and plays in four different hard-to-categorize rock and electronic bands. He has been the official pianist and principal vocal coach for Madison Opera since 2008.

Recently, he recorded his piece “At Last” with soprano Camille Zamora and cellist Yo-Yo Ma as part of “An AIDS Quilt Songbook: Sing For Hope,” an album released to benefit the American Foundation for AIDS Research. Scott’s evening-

length choral and orchestral oratorio “Barbara Allen,” based on the traditional Appalachian folk song, was premiered by the Santa Clara Chorale and San Jose Chamber Orchestra last spring. A recording of his song cycle “To Keep the Dark Away” was just released on Navona Records featuring soprano Jamie-Rose Guarrine and cellist Karl Knapp.

In 2005, Scott received his doctoral degree in composition from the UW-Madison, where he also designed and taught an undergraduate composition curriculum as part of the faculty. That same year, he was awarded first prize in the ASCAP / Lotte Lehmann Foundation Song Cycle Competition, a juried national award in its inaugural year. More recently, he was the second prize winner of the 2016 NATS Art Song Composition Award, and winner of the 2017 Ortus International New Music Competition.

In addition to his activities as a collaborative pianist and composer, Scott has worked as a vocal coach for Atlanta Opera, Opera North, and more; sings tenor professionally with the Madison Choral Project; has been Musical Director for theatrical productions at the Barter Theatre, Endstation Theatre Company, and others; and plays keyboards and sings with The Landed Gentry (a Madison rock band co-founded by Scott), The Parlour Trick (a project blending classical and experimental music), and The Furious Bongos (a Frank Zappa tribute ensemble).

Recent commissions include the original opera *Super Storm!* for Opera for the Young’s 2018-2019 season, which was performed for nearly 75,000 children in almost 200 schools around the Midwest; “Hope Eats You Alive,” a co-commission from the University of St. Thomas and the Madison Choral Project; and “Grandma’s Kitchen,” a song cycle based on a story originally aired on the radio by StoryCorps, commissioned by Sparks & Wiry Cries. Please visit www.scottgendel.com for more information.

MADISON OPERA

Kathryn Smith
John DeMain
Lizabeth Tolles
Jen Fenster
Samantha Garcia
Andrew Rogers
Salvatore S. Vasta III
Kenneth Ferencek
Billy Larimore
Jill Krynicki
Chris Fahrenthold

General Director
Artistic Director
Director of Development
Director of Finance
Patron Services Manager
Marketing Manager
Artistic Manager
Director of Production
Technical Director and Warehouse Coordinator
Production Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager

AUDIO FOR THE ARTS

Buzz Kemper
Noah Gilfillan

Technical Producer
Audio Engineer

SPECIAL THANKS

John Penisten
Overture Center for the Arts

SONG TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

FALSTAFF

Dal labbro il canto estasiato vola

From my lips my song of ecstasy flies far away in the silence of the night,
and at last finds another human's lips which answer it with the same sound.

Then the note, no longer alone, vibrates with joy in a secret accord,
and filling the air before the dawn with love, flies back to its source with another voice.

Thence the sound begins anew, but its purpose is but to unite those who divide it.
Thus did I kiss the beloved lips!

"Lips that are kissed lose none of their allure."

"Indeed they renew it, like the moon."

But the song dies in the kiss when they meet.

Sul fil d'un soffio etesio

On the breath of a fragrant breeze, fly, nimble spirits;
through the branches appears the blue gleam of the rising moon.
Dance! And let your soft steps fit the soft music,
joining magic dancing to the song.

Let us wander beneath the moon, choosing among the flowers.
Every blossom carries in its heart its own fortune.
With lilies and violets let us write secret names;
from our enchanted hands let there spring words,
words illuminated with pure silver and gold, poems and charms.
The fairies have flowers as their ciphers.

~~~~~

## ***KEEP MOVING***

### ***Fuel***

Do not be stilled by anger or grief.  
Burn them both and use that fuel to keep moving.

Look up at the clouds and tip your head way back,  
so the roofs of the houses disappear.

Keep moving.

### ***The Center That Holds***

Think about how you move through landscapes,  
through time zones, across boundaries,  
and you are you, regardless.

Picture yourself as the center that holds,  
no matter what changes occur in your life.

Keep moving.

### ***Among Trees***

Try to get out of your own way today.  
Try to get out of your own way.

Do what you can to quiet your ego,  
to soften the boundary between yourself  
and everything and everyone else.

Try to get out of your own way today.  
Try to get out of your own way.

Breathe deeply.  
Spend time among trees.  
Wander off for awhile.  
Keep moving.

Try to get out of your own way.  
Keep moving.

### ***Don't Be Ashamed***

The road you're traveling is long and uphill.  
Don't be ashamed when you stumble now and then.  
Don't be ashamed.

Adding the weight of shame to what you're already carrying  
will only make the distance feel longer,  
will only make the incline feel steeper.  
The road you're traveling is long and uphill.

Besides, you aren't walking alone.

Eyes ahead.  
Keep moving.

### ***Let Light In***

Remember that changing one thing can change everything.  
Let more light into your life by letting more light into this day.  
Then repeat, and repeat, and repeat, and repeat.

Let more light into your life by letting more light into this day.  
Keep moving.



### ***The Mess is Where the Magic Lives***

Stop putting yourself down for letting sadness seep into your joy,  
or letting joy seep into your sadness.

Your heart is not a cafeteria tray  
for keeping things separate, making sure nothing touches.

Feel it all, even if it's messy.  
The mess is where the magic lives.

Keep moving.

### ***Many Lives***

You will have many lives within this one life.  
Some may end badly.

But every place you've been,  
every person you've loved or let love you,  
every life you've lived already, adds up to who you are.

You will have many lives within this one life.  
You make yourself as you go.

Keep moving.

### ***Eyes Ahead***

Do not be stilled by anger or grief.  
Burn them both and use that fuel to keep moving.

Look back at the road you've traveled to get to this place.

Think of the long miles, the long nights,  
the paths you had to make for yourself when the road seemed to end.  
But it didn't end.

You've made it this far already.  
Keep moving.

You've made it this far already and you can keep going.

Eyes ahead.  
Keep moving.

Keep going.  
Eyes ahead.

Keep moving.

## *THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE*

### *Oh, Is There Not One Maiden Breast*

Oh, is there not one maiden breast  
which does not feel the moral beauty  
of making worldly interest  
subordinate to sense of duty?

Who would not give up willingly  
all matrimonial ambition,  
to rescue such a one as I  
from his unfortunate position?

O, is there not one maiden here  
whose homely face and bad complexion  
have caused all hope to disappear  
of ever winning man's affection?

To such a one, if such there be,  
I swear by Heaven's arch above you,  
if you will cast your eyes on me,  
however plain you be, I'll love you.

### *Poor Wandering One*

Poor wandering one!  
Though thou hast surely strayed,  
take heart of grace,  
thy steps retrace,  
poor wandering one!

Poor wandering one!  
If such poor love as mine  
can help thee find  
true peace of mind,  
why, take it, it is thine!

Take heart, fair days will shine.  
Take any heart – take mine!

Poor wandering one!  
Though thou hast surely strayed,  
take heart of grace,  
thy steps retrace,  
poor wandering one!

Take heart, fair days will shine.  
Take any heart – take mine!

*Stay, Frederic, Stay... Ah, Leave Me Not to Pine*

**Mabel**

All is prepared, your gallant crew await you.  
My Frederic in tears?  
It cannot be that lion-heart quails at the coming conflict?

**Frederic**

No, Mabel, no.  
A terrible disclosure has just been made.  
Mabel, my dearly-loved one, I bound myself to serve the pirate captain  
until I reached my one-and-twentieth birthday.

**Mabel**

But you are twenty-one?

**Frederic**

I've just discovered that I was born in leap-year,  
and that birthday will not be reached by me 'til 1940!

**Mabel**

Oh, horrible! Catastrophe appalling!

**Frederic**

And so, farewell!

**Mabel**

No, no! Ah, Frederic, hear me.  
Stay, Frederic, stay!  
They have no legal claim.  
No shadow of a shame  
will fall upon thy name.  
Stay, Frederic, stay!

**Frederic**

Nay, Mabel, nay!  
Tonight I quit these walls.  
The thought my soul appalls,  
but when stern Duty calls,  
I must obey.

**Mabel**

Ah, leave me not to pine  
alone and desolate.  
No fate seemed fair as mine,  
no happiness so great!  
And Nature, day by day,  
has sung in accents clear  
this joyous roundelay,  
"He loves thee – he is here."

**Frederic**

Ah, must I leave thee here  
in endless night to dream,  
where joy is dark and drear,  
and sorrow all supreme.  
Where nature, day by day,  
will sing, in altered tone,  
this weary roundelay,  
“He loves thee – he is gone.”

In 1940, I of age shall be.  
I'll then return and claim you – I declare it!

**Mabel**

It seems so long!

**Frederic**

Swear that 'til then, you will be true to me.

**Mabel**

Yes, I'll be strong!  
By all the Stanleys dead and gone, I swear it!

**Both**

Oh, here is love, and here is truth,  
and here is food for joyous laughter.  
He/She will be faithful to his/her sooth  
'til we are wed, and even after.

**Frederic**

Oh, here is love, and here is truth.

**Mabel**

Oh, here is love, and here is truth.

**Frederic**

She will be faithful to her sooth...

**Mabel**

He will be faithful to his sooth...

**Frederic**

... 'til we are wed, and even after.

**Mabel**

... 'till we are wed.

**Frederic**

And even after.

**Mabel**

Yes, even after.



### **Both**

Oh, here is love, and here is truth,  
and here is food for joyous laughter.  
He/She will be faithful to his/her sooth  
‘til we are wed, and even after.  
Oh, here is love, and here is truth,  
Oh, here is love, is love!

~~

## **AMERICAN FOLK SONGS**

### ***How Can I Keep from Singing?***

My life flows on in endless song.  
Above earth's lamentation,  
I catch the sweet though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.

No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I'm clinging.  
Since love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?

Through all the tumult and the strife, I hear that music ringing.  
It finds an echo in my soul.  
How can I keep from singing?

Each living thing its song must sing, life sings to life in chorus.  
We gather courage thru the song, not knowing what's before us.

Our songs of freedom, love, and hope,  
down through the ages ringing,  
cold Death defy,  
and that is why I cannot keep from singing.

How can I keep from singing?

### ***Gentle Words***

What the dew is to the flower,  
gentle words are to the soul,  
and a blessing to the giver,  
and so dear to the receiver  
we should never withhold.

Gentle words, kindly spoken,  
often soothe the troubled mind,  
while links of love are broken  
by words that are unkind.

Then o, thou gentle spirit,  
my constant guardian be.  
"Do to others," be my motto,  
"as I'd have them do to me."