4-8-2015

Concert: Opera Workshop Presents The Wolf by the Ears

Dana Wilson
Brian DeMaris
Ithaca College Opera Workshop

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/music_programs

Part of the Music Commons

Recommended Citation
Wilson, Dana; DeMaris, Brian; and Ithaca College Opera Workshop, "Concert: Opera Workshop Presents The Wolf by the Ears" (2015). All Concert & Recital Programs. 944.
http://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/music_programs/944

This Program is brought to you for free and open access by the Concert & Recital Programs at Digital Commons @ IC. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Concert & Recital Programs by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ IC.
Opera Workshop Presents:
*The Wolf by the Ears*

Composed by Dana Wilson
Libretto by J. Robert Lennon & Dana Wilson

Conducted by Brian DeMaris
Stage Direction by David Lefkowich

Co-sponsored by Ithaca College Light Opera

Ford Hall
Wednesday, April 8th, 2015
8:15 pm
Notes from the Composer

This opera has been for me many years in the making—from a lifetime of interest in Jefferson to the DNA analysis linking him to Sally Hemings (and all of its social implications), to hammering out the opera’s dramatic shape, to an exhilarating collaboration with author John (J. Robert) Lennon.

And now I’m thrilled to have the incredible talents of Brian DeMaris and David Lefkowich bring the piece to life on every level—from planning to logistics, to rehearsals, and finally to this evening’s performance. And, finally, I’m excited to witness the coming together of the boundless talent and dedication of principal singers Cherisse Williams and Zach James, and of the entire Ithaca College Opera Workshop cast and orchestra.

I learned so much about this opera in this process, but mainly I learned what commitment and fortitude are required to launch such a project, for which I am deeply grateful.

--Dana Wilson
Artistic Staff

Conductor                   Brian DeMaris
Director                    David Lefkowich
Production Design           Steve TenEyck
Costume Design              Sarah Bertolozzi*
Associate Designers         E-Hui Woo
                            Paul Radassao

Cast

Thomas Jefferson            Zachary James*
Sally Hemings               Cherisse Williams
James Hemings               Eliodoro Castillo
Polly Jefferson             Julie Allison
Martha Jefferson            Meredith Morse
Maria Cosway                Abigail Doering
John Adams                  Stephen Tzianabos
Marquis de Lafayette        Timothy Powers
Benjamin Franklin           Nathan Haltiwanger
James Callender             Fred Diengott
Slave Woman                 Heather Barnes
Slave Man                   D'quan Tyson
Young Sally                 Vera Mae Camel
Young Polly                 Linnea Melo

Dancers                     Deanna Payne
                            D'Laney Bowry

Chorus                      Leanne Averill
                            Sherley-Ann Belleus
                            Emily Beseau
                            D'Laney Bowry
                            Wei En Chan
                            LiAn Chen
                            Xavier Edwards
                            Cynthia Mickenberg
                            Josi Petersen
                            Johanna Ruby
                            Taylor Smith
                            Kristi Spicer
                            Kelly Timko
                            Sarah Welden
                            Mimi White

* Ithaca College alumnus
Covers

Thomas Jefferson  Nathan Haltiwanger
Sally Hemings   Heather Barnes
James Hemings   D'quan Tyson
Polly Jefferson Cynthia Mickenberg
Martha Jefferson Josi Petersen
Maria Cosway   Kelly Timko
John Adams      Timothy Powers
Marquis de Lafayette Stephen Tzianabos
Benjamin Franklin Fred Diengott
Slave Man       Eliodoro Castillo

Orchestra

Violin            Natalie Brandt*
                   Joseph D'Esposito
                   Jenna Jordan
                   Colleen Mahoney
Viola             Daniel Martinez*
                   Joseph Fleischman
Cello             Emily Faris
                   David Fenwick
Bass              Tristen Jarvis
Flute             Sophia Ennocenti*
Oboe              Hannah Cerezo
Clarinet          Nikhil Bartolomeo
Bassoon           Sean Harkin
Trumpet           Jason Ferguson
Horn              Aubrey Landsfeld
Trombone          Benjamin Allen
Percussion        Andrew Garay
Piano             Amy Brinkman-Davis

* Ithaca College alumnus
Synopsis

This opera explores the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, his slave "mistress," within the many contradictory and hypocritical social structures of their time. Jefferson's considerable power yet inability to live his own ideals are what make him both tragic and enduringly human. Sally's ability to negotiate a meaningful life within the context of slavery exhibits her remarkable fortitude and resilience.

The opera is based entirely on historical information. The chorus serves at various times as town's people in Paris and America, and as personal and social conscience.

Prelude

The opera begins with a solo violin accompanying a ballerina, symbolizing the European-American world that Thomas Jefferson inhabits. Then a djembé (African drum) accompanies a jazz/"African" dancer, symbolizing the slave world of Sally Hemings. A brief, awkward duet emerges, though the dancers barely interact.

This leads into the music of the orchestra, followed by the chorus meditating on truth and blood, Jefferson and slavery.

Act I - Monticello

Scene One

Jefferson and his wife Martha express their mutual affection over breakfast. He talks of the burdens surrounding the creation of a new nation, while she complains of her intense pain from complications during her recent childbirth. Martha suddenly collapses.

Scene Two

Martha lies dying as Thomas ruminates on her illness and then tries to comfort her. She begs him to promise her that he will never remarry, and he agrees. Upon her death, he grieves his loss, and laments the difficult position of the newly formed country and the tragic reality of slavery (despite his own ownership of 200 slaves).

He decides to go to Paris to represent the young country as ambassador and try to escape his misery. He summons his slave and personal attendant, James Hemings (Sally's older brother), to prepare for the journey. Returning to his own family, James reacts to this demand aggressively.

Act II-Paris

Scene One - Jefferson's house in Paris

John Adams and Benjamin Franklin discuss Jefferson's successes after two years in Paris. Adams' puritanical streak and Franklin's "dirty old man" nature are suggested. Jefferson enters and complains that he finds Paris foreign to
both his political and cultural sensibilities, and declares his longing for Monticello. Adams and Franklin beg him to stay, as France is on the verge of revolution and there is much work to be done. Maria Cosway, a married belle de Paris who has been pursuing Jefferson, arrives hoping to take him to lunch. Their mutual attraction and flirting leads to an awkward embrace, as Adams and Franklin discuss some business. As the two duets merge to a quartet, Franklin tires of the discussion and implores the other to join him for lunch. Jefferson remains, pondering in an aria the dichotomy created by the logical sense of his head and the longing of his heart.

Scene Two - on board ship, looking over the railing

Polly, Jefferson's daughter, now in her early teens, is en route to Paris to join her father. Sally Hemings, now 14 years old, is her slave and companion for the journey. They sing of their respective frustrations on having to make the journey and of their aspirations.

Scene Three - Jefferson's house in Paris

Jefferson and Polly are reunited. Thomas acknowledges Sally, now as a young woman. Thomas and the chorus reflect on the ambiguity of relationships in the South, and the fact that Sally and his dead wife, Martha, are actually half-sisters.

Scene Four - Jefferson's house in Paris

Sally and her brother James (Jefferson's slave and personal attendant) are reunited. James explains that in Paris they are not bound by slavery, and the issues of freedom and loyalty are explored. Sally reflects on the toll slavery has taken on her brother and family.

Scene Five - Jefferson's house in Paris

Jefferson and Lafayette discuss the rising discontent in Paris (leading soon thereafter to the French Revolution). Polly and Sally enter for their French lesson with Jefferson, during which he becomes aware of his attraction to Sally. Polly departs and he talks with Sally and seeds for a relationship are formed.

Scene Six - Jefferson's house in Paris, with the Revolution exploding outside

Revolutionaries march amid chaos in the streets, as Jefferson's and Sally's relationship develops inside. Eventually they discuss their bond in both romantic and social terms. He realizes he can't do anything more in Paris and wants her to return with him to Monticello; she realizes she is technically free in Paris, and wants him to grant her and her brother freedom should they return to the U.S. She announces that she is pregnant, and finally agrees to return with him, even though he can't promise her freedom. They declare their love for each other, but wariness and fear are always present.

There will be one 15-minute intermission.
Act III - Virginia

Scene One - A tavern scene

With Jefferson now elected President, an unscrupulous newspaperman, James Callender, investigates and spreads stories that Jefferson and Sally Hemings are intimate and have had several children together who are now slaves at Monticello (some even with fair skin and red hair). Folks express the widespread belief in this story by singing a song published and quite popular at the time.

Scene Two - Monticello

Jefferson's and Sally's relationship continues, though difficulty with its nature and ramifications persists. Another slave woman questions Sally as to how she can continue the relationship. Meanwhile, Polly learns of, and is enraged by, Callender's claims; Jefferson refuses to acknowledge or deny them. Overhearing this, Sally sings of her love, her family, and her plight.

Scene Three - Monticello

The orchestra plays a European-style minuet as guests dance and socialize. Jefferson mingles, revealing his flamboyant side--taking generous gulps of wine and charming the women. His daughter Polly joins the fun, while Sally is serving food (and the two occasionally exchange glances, Polly's menacing). Eventually Jefferson is asked to play his violin. When the music ends, guests applaud, say good night and depart. Jefferson, Sally, and Polly then prepare for bed and retire.

Meanwhile, slave music begins intensely outside the house: a spiritual ("You gonna reap what you sow") which then evolves into a ritualistic dance of exorcism. Eventually, the slaves draw knives and stealthily enter the house in a ritualistic dance; screams are heard as they slash Polly's throat and then Sally's. As they are just about to slash Jefferson's, he bolts upright in his bed and screams--realizing it has all been just a nightmare. The drums suddenly stop and the slaves vanish. He bemoans the fact that America's relationship to slavery is like having the wolf by the ears: you can't hold on much longer, yet you can't let go.

Scene Four - Monticello

Accompanied by a chant-like refrain, individual chorus members take turns explaining what became historically of many of the characters mentioned in the opera. This is followed by a brief recapitulation of the opening chorus, but now as Jefferson is dying. Gradually all principals join in, singing from their own perspective: Jefferson ("All men are created equal," etc.), Sally (about truth and love), and Polly (promising her father that no one will learn of his relationship with Sally).

A main musical theme returns, now with a ghostly aura, and the lights fade to black.

- Dana Wilson
Production Staff
Associate Producer
Meredith Morse
Associate Conductor & Chorus Master
Aimee Radics
Assistant Conductor
Randi Ellen Rudolph
Assistant Director
Kelly Timko
Assistant Stage Managers
Fred Diengott
Stephan Tzianabus
Associate Costume Design
Anna Grigo
Production Electrician
Evan Herman-Chin
Vocal Coach
Blaise Bryski

Acknowledgements
Amani Gospel Singers
Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers
First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca
Ithaca College Light Opera
Ithaca High School
Voices Multicultural Chorus
Mu Phi Epsilon
Sigma Alpha Iota

Ithaca College Faculty & Staff:
Barbara Anger
Randie Blooding
Amanda DeMaris
Diana Dimitrova
Anthony DiRenzo
Mat Fournier
Sara Haefeli
Brad Hougham
Paula Ioanide
Carl Johengen
Jennifer Kay
Erik Kibelsbeck
Caitlin Mathes
Carol McAmis
Scott Mello
Deborah Montgomery
David Parks
Patrice Pastore
James Pfrehm
Dawn Pierce
Kasey Stewart
Jenny Stockdale
Ivy Walz
Marc Webster

Karl Paulnack, dean
Biographical Notes

Cast & Production Staff biographies can be found at:
www.ithaca.edu/music/ensembles/opera/thewolfbytheears/

Zachary James, bass, created the role of Abraham Lincoln in the world premiere of Philip Glass’ opera *The Perfect American* at the Teatro Real in Madrid, a role he reprised for London’s English National Opera and Australia’s Opera Queensland. He created the operatic roles of Oberon in the world premiere of Kristin Hevner Wyatt’s *Il Sogno*, at the Teatro Citta della Pieve in Umbria and Rebbe in Andy Teirstein’s *A Blessing on the Moon* at Vancouver’s Chutzpah Festival. He created the role of Lurch in *The Addams Family* on Broadway, Hassinger in the Tony Award winning Broadway revival of *South Pacific* at Lincoln Center, and sang Handel’s *Messiah* in the 2007 Broadway play, *Coram Boy*. A winner of the 2009 Lotte Lenya Competition, Zach has been engaged by US opera companies including Opera Philadelphia, Opera Roanaoke, Shreveport Opera, Central City Opera, Ash Lawn Opera and Knoxville Opera and in concert with The New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Collegiate Chorale, American Symphony Orchestra, Symphony of the Mountains and Knoxville Symphony Orchestra. In addition to originating in three Broadway shows, Zach played Off-Broadway as Pasquale in *The Most Happy Fella* and Jo-Jo in *Irma la Douce*. Zach is a 2005 graduate of the Musical Theatre program at Ithaca College where he received the Outstanding Young Alumni Award. Upcoming: Bernstein’s *Mass* with The Philadelphia Orchestra, World Premiere of *Breaking The Waves* with Opera Philadelphia, World Premiere of *Do Not Go Gentle* with The Phoenicia Festival, Handel’s *Susanna* with NYC’s Collegiate Chorale. @zjamesoperabass
www.ZachJames.com

Artistic Staff

Sarah Bertolozzi is a costume designer from Beacon, New York, currently based in New York City. Raised with a performance background, Sarah discovered her passion for working with costumes while studying theatre at college. She went on to graduate with Distinction from the B.F.A. Theatrical Design program at Ithaca College. Since then, Sarah has enjoyed designing productions ranging from intimate, one performer plays to large-scale musicals with casts of sixty. Design Work Includes: Shear Madness - 1st Nat'l Tour (Troika Entertainment); Spamalot (Florida Studio Theatre); Snow White Zombie: Apocalypse (State of Play). Assistant Design work includes: Sister Act - First Nat'l Tour (Troika Entertainment); New Girl in Town (Irish Rep); Carrie (MCC); The Atmosphere of Memory (Labyrinth Theater Company). Sarah is an Artistic Associate/Resident Costume Designer for FullStop Collective.

Brian DeMaris currently serves as Music Director of Mill City Summer Opera, Director of Opera and Musical Theatre at Ithaca College, and Artist-Faculty at the Aspen Music Festival. He has worked with New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Opera Theater of Saint Louis, Syracuse Opera, Tri-Cities Opera, American Opera Projects, American Lyric Theater, Ash Lawn Opera Festival, Music Saint Croix and the Israel Chamber Orchestra. He has appeared at the United Nations, the Aspen Music Festival, Boston’s Jordan Hall, New York’s Studio 54, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Symphony Space,
Alice Tully Hall, and in recitals, competitions, and master classes throughout the United States and abroad. He is the 2nd place winner of the 2013 American Prize in Opera and Musical Theater Conducting. DeMaris has also taught at Lawrence University, New England Conservatory School of Continuing Education, George Mason University's International Opera Alliance, the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv, and "Meet the Artist" at Lincoln Center. He has served on panels with Opera America and the National Opera Association, and presented master classes with the National Association of Teachers of Singing, New York State Music Teachers Association and New York State School Music Association. His students have performed on Broadway, film and television, and at opera companies and festivals throughout the world.

David Lefkowich is an accomplished stage director and fight choreographer and has enjoyed success with different companies including the Metropolitan Opera, Teatre alla Scala, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, Minnesota Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera. Directing credits include Don Giovanni, Idomeneo, Le Nozze di Figaro and L'Histoire du Soldat at the Ravinia Music Festival with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Maestro James Conlon conducting. David also directed and choreographed L'Histoire du Soldat at the Juilliard School, with Maestro Conlon. He made his European debut directing Le Portrait de Manon at the Gran Teatre Liceu in Barcelona, Spain and followed with The Rake’s Progress at La Monnaie in Brussels, Belgium. Other credits include directing and choreographing new productions of Simon Boccanegra (Kentucky Opera), La fille du Regiment and Acis and Galatea (Madison Opera), Salome (Minnesota Opera), Roméo et Juliette (Florida Grand Opera, Minnesota Opera, Virginia Opera, Opera Tampa, Seagle Music Colony), Tosca at Boston Lyric Opera, Cosi Fan Tutte (Opera Saratoga), La Traviata (San Francisco Opera, Lake George Opera), Le Portrait de Manon (Glimmerglass Opera), and Il Trovatore (New Orleans Opera, Fort Worth Opera). David is currently the Artistic Director of the Mill City Summer Opera in Minneapolis, Minnesota where he will direct the upcoming Daughter of the Regiment.


Steve TenEyck is an Associate Professor and the Associate Chair for the Department of Theatre Arts. Design work has been seen both nationally and internationally. Companies include Syracuse Stage, Pennsylvania Shakespeare, TACT-NYC, Big Art Group NYC, Tacoma Opera, Madison Opera, Syracuse Opera, Minnesota Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Tri-Cities Opera, Mill City Summer Opera, Kitchen Theatre Company, St. Louis Rep, and Hangar Theatre. Designs for live events with the Herson Group Ltd. for such
institutions as Northwestern, Princeton, Cornell, Texas A&M, and the University of Tennessee, to name a few. Steve received his M.F.A. from the University of Washington in Seattle and is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829.

The compositions of Dana Wilson have been performed throughout the United States and Europe, and in much of East Asia and Australia. He has received grants from, among others, the National Endowment for the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, New England Foundation for the Arts, New York State Council for the Arts, Arts Midwest, and Meet the Composer. His music can be heard on Klavier, Albany, Summit, Centaur, Innova, Meister Music, Elf, Open Loop, Mark, Redwood, Musical Heritage Society, and Kosei Recordings. Dana Wilson is currently Charles A. Dana Professor of Music in the School of Music at Ithaca College, and holds a doctorate from the Eastman School of Music. He is co-author of Contemporary Choral Arranging, and has written on his own compositional process in A Composer’s Insight and Composers on Composing for Band. He has been a Yaddo Fellow (at the artists’ retreat in Saratoga Springs, New York), a Wye Fellow at the Aspen Institute, and a Fellow at the Society for Humanities, Cornell University.
Student Assistants

Stage Crew
- Eliodoro Castillo
- Nathan Haltiwanger
- Cynthia Mickenberg
- Josi Petersen
- Tim Powers
- Johanna Ruby
- Karimah White

Wardrobe Assistants
- Leanne Averill
- Sherley-Ann Belleus
- Emily Beseau
- Wei En Chan
- LiAn Chen
- Kristi Spicer
- Sarah Welden

Publicity Assistants
- Julie Allison
- Heather Barnes
- Abigail Doering
- Meredith Morse
- Cherisse Williams

Social Media Assistants
- Taylor Smith
- D’quan Tyson