



'DON QUIXOTE'

« Check out star dancers of the future in the one-time-only Peninsula Youth Ballet presentation of "Don Quixote." The performance is 7:30 p.m. Friday at the San Mateo Performing Arts Center, 600 N. Delaware St., San Mateo. Tickets are \$15-\$25. Call (650) 631-3767 or visit www.pyb.org.



STERN GROVE LAUNCHES

Father's Day signals the start of the annual Stern Grove Festival, where families and friends gather on Sundays to picnic and enjoy free music and dance performances. Local R&B icon **Booker T. Jones** and Detroit "Great Lady of Soul" Bettye LaVette launch the festival's 71st season. Performances continue through Aug. 17 on Sundays at 2 p.m. Sigmund Stern Grove is at Sloat Boulevard and 19th Avenue, San Francisco. Call (415) 252-6252 or visit www.sterngrove.org.

LOCAL EVENTS

TUESDAY

Albany Consort

Noontime Concerts, which presents low-cost daytime programs of classical music on Tuesdays, welcomes the Albany Consort this week.

WHEN: 12:30 p.m.

WHERE: Old St. Mary's Cathedral, 660 California St., San Francisco

PRICE: Suggested admission is \$5

INFO: Call (415) 777-3211 or visit www.noontimeconcerts.org

THURSDAY

Golden Thread

The theater troupe presents "Jihad Jones and the Kalashnikov Babes," a comic play by Yussef El Guindi. The story involves a stage actor of Middle Eastern descent who must decide whether to accept the role of a machine-gun-strapping terrorist.

WHEN: 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 5 p.m. Sundays; closes June 29

WHERE: Thick House, 1695 18th St., San Francisco

PRICE: Tickets are \$15 to \$25

INFO: Call (415) 401-8081 or visit www.goldenthread.org

Redshift ensemble

The Redshift ensemble performs a concert of classical music ranging from the traditional to the experimental. Composers include Belinda Reynolds, Evan Ziporyn, Donnacha Dennehy and James Holt.

WHEN: 8 p.m.

WHERE: Old First Presbyterian Church, 1751 Sacramento St., San Francisco

PRICE: Tickets are \$12 to \$15

INFO: Call (415) 474-1608 or visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

SATURDAY

Youth dance concert

Chamberdance, a youth dance company, presents its annual performance with the Academy of Ballet. A program highlight is artistic director Richard Gibson's "Adagio for 7 and 2" with music by Samuel Barber.

WHEN: 8 p.m. Saturday; 3 p.m. Sunday

WHERE: Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center, Buchanan Street and Marina Boulevard, San Francisco

PRICE: Tickets are \$18 to \$24

INFO: Call (415) 345-7575 or visit www.chamberdancesf.org

MUSIC

Growing old on the wings of songs

The San Francisco Boys Chorus still going strong after 60 years

By Janos Gereben
Special to The Examiner

Just months before he died at age 32 in 1982, the great Oakland Symphony conductor Calvin Simmons said about his work, "I am here because of Madi."

Simmons was among the many protégés of Madi Bacon, the music teacher and choral director who founded the San Francisco Boys Chorus in 1948 along with Gaetano Merola, founder-director of the San Francisco Opera.

The chorus, now directed by Ian Robertson, is celebrating its 60th anniversary with a gala concert at the War Memorial Opera House Sunday and a summer tour of southern France with stops in Marseilles, Monaco and Aix-en-Provence.

As 225 youngsters from 48 Bay Area cities continue in the steps of Simmons (who joined at age 9 and conducted at 11), the founders' emphasis on including underprivileged singers persists; scholarships provide tuition, uniforms and transportation to more than 25 young singers from underserved neighborhoods in San Francisco.

Alumni loyalty has served the organization well over the years. Dr. Peter Libby, an alumnus from the 1960s, has provided the lead gift for the chorus' Madi Bacon Endowment Fund for Music Education Scholarships. He'll present the first endowment award to a choir member at Sunday's performance, which features Éric Marty's "C. elegans," Jeremy Faust's "Parvus sum," Léo Delibes' rarely performed "Messe breve" and Franz Schubert's Mass in C Major.

Well-known alumni include author Daniel Handler (aka Lemony Snicket), actor Joshua Jackson, singer Christopheren Nomura, a cappella direc-

tor Deke Sharon, Fort Worth Opera Artistic Director Joe Illick, Charlotte (North Carolina) Symphony resident conductor Alan Yamamoto and Seattle Opera Chorus Director Philipp Kelsey.

Faust, with twin careers in medicine and music, remembers his SFBC days with great affection:

"The chorus was a big part of who I was as a kid. At some point I chose it over school sports and I remember that being a turning point. For me, singing complicated harmonies gave me a rush that other kids might have gotten from things like skateboarding or even getting into trouble. About the worst thing I ever did was unsuccessfully trying to make a bootleg recording of a San Francisco Opera [production] I was performing in, for my personal enjoyment."

When Bacon, a student of the great conduc-

tor Serge Koussevitzky, was asked to recruit and train boys to perform in San Francisco Opera's 1948 "Carmen" and "La Bohème," she formed what at that time was the country's only boys' opera repertory chorus. Bacon remained SFBC director until her retirement in 1972.

During decades of affiliation with the opera, chorus members have participated in 164 productions, performing in "Tannhäuser," "Macbeth" and "The Magic Flute" in the last season alone.

The chorus continues to enrich young lives. Robertson, in charge of the San Francisco Opera's grown-up chorus, added SFBC in 1996 because he was "fascinated by the quality of sound that boys could produce. ... I agreed to be interim director until they sought a new leader. It's 2008, and I'm still exploring the depths of this genre."



The San Francisco Boys Chorus celebrates six decades with a gala concert Sunday at the War Memorial Opera House. — Courtesy photo

IF YOU GO

S.F. Boys Chorus

Where: War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco

When: 7:30 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: \$15 to \$60

Contact: (415) 392-4400 or www.cityboxoffice.com

Apex of Yiddish theater makes its way to Davies Hall

The San Francisco Symphony presentation of "The Thomashefskys" is a music-hall apotheosis of the king and queen of Yiddish theater, Boris and Bessie T.

Says Michael Tilson Thomas, their grandson, and also creator, narrator, conductor of the show: "You can trace the whole history of Broadway music from its roots in the Yiddish theater, from klezmer and operetta, to Gershwin and Tin Pan Alley, and on to Broadway musicals."

It's a tall order, but those who saw this multimedia documentary concert in 2005 vouch for it, and

recommend the program wholeheartedly.

There are few events combining music, drama, comedy, personal and musical history in such a seamless, joyful manner. Judy Blazer, Neal Benari, Ronit Widmann-Levi and Eugene Brancoveanu are soloists.

Performances are at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday at Davies Symphony Hall, located at 201 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco. Tickets are \$35 to \$125. Call (415) 864-6000 or visit www.sfsymphony.org.

— Staff report



Michael Tilson Thomas based "The Thomashefskys" on the lives of his grandparents. — Courtesy photo