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Connecticut Lyric Opera to Perform “Susannah” During *SailFest*

New London, CT – June 1, 2007 – Connecticut Lyric Opera (CLO) is pleased to announce the final production of their fourth season, a performance during *SailFest* of Carlisle Floyd’s popular American opera, *Susannah* on Friday, July 13th at 8 PM at First Congregational Church in downtown New London. This event will also mark the premiere performance of CLO’s Sound Opera Institute, its newly created summer study program.

Susannah, an American folk opera of raw emotional power based on the Biblical story of “Susannah and the Elders,” is the poignant story of a girl’s life and dreams shattered by bigotry, zealotry, and the abuse of power. The story revolves around Susannah Polk, an attractive but innocent girl who is observed bathing by a group of church elders who then falsely accuse her of sinfulness and "loose" behavior. One the most beloved and performed of all American operas, *Susannah* combines folk dances and revival hymns with poetry and music in a way that brings seemingly unremarkable characters to life, contrasting the depth of passions and emotions with the tragedy of human weaknesses, both real and perceived.

Starring as the innocent yet vivacious Susannah is soprano Jurate Svedaite-Waller who is well known to local audiences, most recently performing Contessa in CLO’s “Nozze di Figaro” and Donna Anna in “Don Giovanni.” Also returning from the “Figaro” production is baritone Tim Hill (Count Almaviva) as the Rev. Olin Blicht, the itinerant preacher who, though responsible for condemning Susannah, is not above the pleasures of the flesh. Directing and producing this collaborative effort will be CLO’s General Director, John Waller, while conducting will be CLO’s Artistic Director, Adrian Mackiewicz. The opera will be set as written in Appalachia in “the recent past,” performed in English and feature CLO’s strong and dedicated chorus; however, unlike mainstage CLO productions, the opera will be performed only with piano accompaniment.

“For a number of reasons, *Susannah* ranks as one of the most popular American operas,” says director Waller. “Not only is the music lyrical and beautiful - making it more approachable than many contemporary works - but the characters and subject matter are very believable and relevant to us today. The level of intolerance and narrow-mindedness represented by many of today’s talking heads, on both the left and right, is echoed in this morality tale that was written under the shadow of McCarthyism in the 1950’s.” His wife, Svedaite-Waller, adds, “Even though the opera revolves around Susannah, it’s really about human nature people and how many people are afraid to face their own short-comings. Often, they simply find somebody they can point their finger at to make themselves feel better, but it turns out they’re hiding behind their own desires, fears and hypocrisy.”



Soprano **Jurate Svedaite-Waller** (Susannah) has performed throughout Europe and the U.S. with the Lithuanian National Chamber Orchestra, the European Baroque Festival Opera, Kaunas Chamber Orchestra, Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra, the Lithuanian National Ensemble "Lietuva," and Mystic River Chorale, among others. Her opera credits include Marguerite in *Faust*, Adina in *l'Elisir d'Amore*, Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin* and Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, as well as Contessa in *Il Nozze di Figaro*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Micaela in *Carmen*, Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and Valencienne in *The Merry Widow* in CLO productions. Ms. Svedaite-Waller holds a Masters and Bachelors in Music from the Lithuanian Music Academy and now resides in SE Connecticut where she teaches voice at Connecticut College and Thames Valley Music School.



Baritone **Timothy S. Hill**, (Olin Blitch) has received accolades for both his beautiful singing and visceral stagecraft. Of his recent performance as Scarpia in *Tosca*, OperaNotes.com said "Timothy Hill was the star of the day." Newark's The Star Ledger called his Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, "...most polished, with a fine burly baritone and a developed actor's sense of timing." During the summer of 2004, Tim participated in The Santa Fe Opera's Apprentice Program for Singers. Some of his favorite roles include Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Sweeney in *Sweeney Todd*, Marcello in *La bohème*, and Cinderella's Prince in *Into the Woods*. He also has sung the role of Don Basilio in Paisiello's original and rarely performed *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at the Théâtre d'Evreux in Evreux, France. Mr. Hill was the recipient of the distinguished Mrs. David C. Tyrrell Award at the Shreveport Opera's Singer of the Year competition in 2000.

Sound Opera Institute was created by Connecticut Lyric Opera to provide a summer study program for student and emerging performers, providing an idyllic summer location on Long Island Sound and a potentially large audience with its final performances during *SailFest*, Southeastern Connecticut's largest annual event with over 250,000 visitors attracted to the area for music, fun and fireworks. The program is a three-week resident curriculum designed to provide performing opportunities, intensive instruction in voice, repertoire, diction, acting, auditioning and other areas related to preparing for the professional world of opera and vocal performance. While the full course of study will not begin until June 2008, this introductory opera and workshops associated with the preparation and production of Floyd's masterpiece will serve as the inaugural event of this exciting new endeavor.

About Connecticut Lyric Opera

Founded in 2003 by a group of professional musicians and opera-lovers, CLO is based in New London and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit cultural and educational organization whose mission is: 1) to present opera to people of all ages in such a way as to foster a love and appreciation of the form in particular, and classical and vocal music in general; 2) to encourage the development of CT based singers, musicians and theatrical artisans through their participation in professional opera productions; 3) to contribute to the cultural life of SE CT and beyond with the highest quality operas and concerts from the traditional and contemporary repertoires.

CLO's 2007-2008 Season, their fifth, will include mainstage productions of Puccini's immortal *La Boheme* and the hilarious operetta *Die Fledermaus*, an OPERAtunites production of *Hansel and Gretel* for children and families in September, and a series of vocal recitals throughout the year. CLO is grateful for the generous support of the Bodenwein Foundation, the Frank Loomis Palmer Fund, Pfizer, Liberty Bank, Mohegan Sun, The New London Day and a number of private foundations and individuals whose support have made this season possible. For more information about these or any other events, call (860) 861-1069 or visit CtLyricOpera.org.