



A WORLD OF MUSIC THAT OPENED IN THE TWINKLING OF A MAESTRO'S EYE

THE OCCHIATA Foundation is a charitable organization dedicated to introducing schoolchildren to opera. Its founders are brother and sister Terrence and Franca Gargiulo and their mother, Gloria.

“Our mission is a simple one,” explained Franca. “It is to bring American students to opera, and American opera to the world.”

They have made great strides. Since 2009 they have introduced more than 14,000 Monterey County students to opera by taking them to the live-streamed HD production from the Metropolitan Opera offered at Del Monte Cinemas, and through presentations at area schools.

Lifetime achievement

The Gargiulo's operatic legacy comes to them from the family's patriarch, Maestro Theodore Gargiulo, a conductor who, in 2001, received a lifetime achievement award at Lincoln Center in New York.

Terrance and Franca told me about sitting around the radio

when they were children listening to the Metropolitan Operas as their father explained the stories and even sang and acted out some of the parts. “Occhiata” translates from Italian to “a twinkling of an eye,” which corresponds to the wink their father gave when he was particularly pleased with a rehearsal

Scenic Views

By JERRY GERVASE

or a concert he was conducting — or just listening to.

I remember watching Terrance, Franca and their mother Gloria doing just that at North County Middle School in Castroville when they made a presentation about Donizetti's opera “Don Pasquale” to the seventh- and eighth-grade students.

Terrance is a natural at these presentations as he uses short videos to show the students that people in Donizetti's time

laughed at the same things people laugh at today. He gets the students to act out the humorous parts of “Don Pasquale,” and shows them clips from current movies, cartoons and TV shows to demonstrate that jokes haven't changed much. The students also learn that opera isn't quite as stuffy as they thought.

Between terror and faith

In addition, Terrance and his father wrote an opera, “Tryillias,” based on the life of Atatban, a fictional fourth member of the Magi who visited the baby Jesus. Portions have been performed at Lincoln Center in New York. Franca described the story as “an archetypal struggle between terror and faith, power and love.”

“Tryillias” will be presented by the Occhiata Foundation and the Arts Council of Monterey County at Santa Catalina School on March 2. There will be two performances: Noon for Monterey County students, and 3 p.m. for the public. There is

See **GERVASE** page 20RE

GERVASE

From page 8RE

no charge for the performance, but you need to register on Eventbrite, and do so soon, because the concert hall is small. The url is <https://bit.ly/2FmU411> (or search for “Tryillias.”)

Also, the fine work the Gargiulos are doing can always use financial support. You can contribute at occhiata.org/get-involved.

Franca told me, “This year, in addition to watching an opera, we’re able to give students a glimpse of what it takes to conceive, write, produce and present this art form.” That is an exciting prospect for youngsters to consider. She said that when students attend the operas at the movie theaters, they are blown away when they see the backstage set changes. They never realized so many possible careers — besides singing — are open to them.

Not hard at all

My personal involvement with the talented Gargiulo family began years ago when Maestro Theodore Luigi Gargiulo, who died in 2006, sent me a musical score. You can imagine my surprise looking at six pages of sheet music and realizing that the lyrics were one of my columns. I had to meet this genius who displayed such impeccable taste.

The column was a silly poem called “Tome Improvement,” about the love-and-war struggles between men and women.

When I met him I remarked that it must have taken him forever to write a complicated musical score from my poem.

“Not really,” he replied, “I heard the music in my head during the night. In the morning all I had to do was transfer it to paper. It took me longer to write it down than to compose it.”

I thought he was minimizing the significance of what he did.

“You see,” he said gently, “a good composer hears with his eyes and sees with his ears.”

I knew he had spoken words to a truth I was already aware of but could never articulate. So many times I see a column in my head before its rhythm can be “heard” by tapping it out on a computer keyboard. And in the twinkling of an eye I learned about the wonderful symbiotic relationship between music and writing.

“Tryillias” is a world premier happening right here on our Peninsula presented by a worthwhile organization. Get involved.

Contact Jerry at jerrygervase@yahoo.com.



FOR MORE INFO SEE:

<http://occhiata.org/tryillias-2019>

