

CAST

Don Giovanni	Jose Sacin
Leporello	Robert Ritter
Donna Elvira	Heather Bingham
Donna Anna	Harlie Sponaugle (5/15); Jennifer Hosmer (5/17)
Zerlina	Adriana Balzan; Cathy Teixeira (cover)
Don Ottavio	John Turner
Masetto	Zain Shariff
Il Commendatore	Sean Pflueger

Kathy Detwiler, Piano
Molly Khatcheressian, Conductor

There will be one fifteen-minute intermission between Act I and Act II

ABOUT THE OPERA AND LIBRETTIST

Don Giovanni, which premiered on October 29, 1787, is the second of the three operas on which Mozart collaborated with librettist Lorenzo da Ponte and is based upon the legend of the notorious Don Juan. da Ponte himself gained some notoriety; he took a mistress while ordained as a priest, had a child, and, when reprimanded by the vicar-general, decided to open a brothel with his mistress. Consequently banished from Venice on charges of “public concubinage”, da Ponte traveled to Austria, France and England before finally settling down in the United States, where he was, sequentially, a grocer, Italian teacher, a bookstore-owner, and finally the first professor of Italian Literature at Columbia.

Working to the end, the overture was completed the day before the first performance. The opera premiered at the Estates Theatre in Prague and, as was typical of many of Mozart’s works in Prague, was a tremendous success there.

NOTES FROM THE COMPANY

Welcome to our production of Mozart’s opera masterpiece *Don Giovanni*. This production arose from a sequence of emails between our group of singers back in January. We have all performed together in groups of two or three over the past six years in dozens of productions with many of the other Washington DC area opera companies, including Summer Opera Theater Company of Washington, Victorian Lyric Opera Company, Zaruela DiSi, The In Series, Bel Cantanti Opera, and others. Despite a bewildering array of professional singing obligations in the first months of this year, we found a window of time where we could work together intensely and bring our version to fruition here in May.

What we shared in this initial set of discussions was our fascination with this particular opera. We love the sublime melodies, and the unusual diversity of characters who yet had real depth. Then there is the libretto, which took the classic tale of Don Juan (at least 150 years old when da Ponte began writing) and transformed it far beyond the theatrical predecessors of the 17th and 18th centuries into a glimpse into the dark side of human appetites, set in a fast-moving story with an overriding, wonderful collection of comedic moments. For all of us, this was rich material—challenging, for sure—but intensely interesting as a broad palette on which to work in rehearsal. Bit by bit, it began to come together.

The opera came on the heels of Mozart’s hugely successful *Le Nozze di Figaro*, which was presented in Prague the year before. (*Continued on the next page.*)^b Mozart’s father Leopold had died in May, just as work was beginning on *Don Giovanni*. Mozart was perhaps stung a bit by having *Le Nozze* overshadowed in Vienna by Martin’s *Una cosa rara*. And da Ponte, on and off during the year, is frequently a social companion of the aging Casanova. How many things can one weave into an opera? Casanova and Don Juan/Giovanni? Leopold, just perhaps as the tormenting, judgemental figure and the dogmatic statue in the graveyard and guest at dinner? And the musical jokes before the dinner – the first one an excerpt from ... *Una cosa rara* itself. What a gem!

Thank you, again, for coming. If you would like more, just give us a bit of encouragement in an email to innovativi.Riverbend.Opera@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We owe special words of thanks to several young people who have volunteered their time to make our production possible. The Mozart score does, perhaps, have "too many notes." The pages fly by, and our accompanist is very ably assisted by Mr. Ben Yang who is turning pages just at the right time. The wonderful story is too good not to translate in complete detail. Surtitles operation is being managed by Ms. Jeila Irmusa and Ms. Trina Ross. The stage risers and music stands are provided through the cooperation of the music department of McLean's Longfellow Middle School, and we are very grateful for their loan.

innovatìvi Riverbend Opera Company

Don Giovanni

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

innovatìvi

Riverbend Opera Company

May 15, 2009, 7:30 PM

May 17, 2009, 2:30 PM



Zain Shariff, baritone, (Masetto). A recent graduate of the University of Maryland, Zain has appeared in performances of *Armide*, *Così fan tutte*, *Eugene Onegin*, and *Xerxes* with the Maryland Opera Studio; *Carmen* with Summer Opera Theatre Company; and in *La traviata* and *Don Pasquale* with Bel Cantanti Opera. Non-operatic roles include Ali Hakim in *Oklahoma!* and the Vicomte de Nanjac in *An Ideal Husband*. By day, he is the operations manager for a consulting engineering firm in Columbia, MD.

Sean Pflueger, bass-baritone, (Il Commendatore) has sung with many groups in the area including Bel Cantanti Opera, Washington Savoyards, the In Series, and Virginia Opera. Roles he has sung this season are Lord Mountarat in *Iolanthe*, Pooh-Bah in *The Mikado*, Marquis in *La traviata*, and Betto in *Gianni Schicchi*.

Kathy Detwiler (piano) is a graduate of The Catholic University of America. She and her husband Michael Talley are members of the Contemporary choir at St Matthew's Cathedral. They reside with their 4 cats in Capitol Hill.

Molly Khatcheresian (conductor) serves as choral conductor at Longfellow School in McLean after a sabbatical year in post-graduate work in choral conducting at the Kodály Institute in Hungary. Before moving to Virginia, she was director of education for Orlando Opera, and directed children's choirs for mainstage productions. Other local conducting engagements include work with the Fairfax Choral Society, and conducting for choirs at Temple Rodef Shalom in McLean, and other local churches and schools.

There are links to the websites of many of our singers where more information is available at www.connincorp.com/iROC

SYNOPSIS (adapted from *Opera Guide*)

Act I

As the opera begins, Leporello waits outside a house where his master, Don Giovanni, is forcing himself upon Donna Anna who does not recognize him in disguise. She cries for help and her father, the Commendatore, runs to her assistance. In the ensuing fight Don Giovanni kills the Commendatore. When Donna Anna and her betrothed, Don Ottavio, discover the body, Donna Anna swears vengeance.

Donna Elvira, recently jilted by Don Giovanni, arrives in search of him, but he shrugs her off, leaving Leporello to read out his 'book of conquests,' where the names of the Don's 2065 lovers are recorded. The Don next encounters a peasant wedding and immediately pursues Zerlina, the bride of Masetto, involving Leporello in his scheme. Donna Elvira warns Zerlina about Don Giovanni, and in an encounter with Donna Anna and Don Ottavio, Anna identifies Giovanni as her attacker and the killer of her father, though Ottavio is unconvinced. Don Giovanni invites everyone to a masked ball at his estate, where he continues to pursue Zerlina, who tries to calm Masetto's growing concern. Zerlina is at first persuaded by Don Giovanni's charm, but eventually resists with a scream that interrupts the party. Though the Don tries to blame Leporello for the attack, he is unmasked, and his victims tell him that vengeance is nigh.

Act II

To pursue Elvira's maid, Don Giovanni exchanges his clothing with Leporello while Leporello engages Elvira pretending to be the remorseful Don. Masetto arrives with a gang of men intent on punishing Giovanni, but, disguised as Leporello, the Don toys with them and then beats Masetto half to death. Giovanni and Leporello escape to a graveyard, where there is a statue of the dead Commendatore, whom Don Giovanni mockingly invites to dinner. That night when Don Giovanni is at his table, the stone guest appears at the door, invites him to repent and, when he refuses, offers a return invitation to dine. Don Giovanni accepts, takes the Commendatore's hand and is removed screaming down to Hell, as a chorus of devils warns of the torments that await him. *(Continued on the next page.)*

Leporello describes these events to the others, who turn to the future: Don Ottavio to renew his suit to Donna Anna, Donna Elvira to life in a convent, Masetto and Zerlina to a cozy dinner with friends, and Leporello himself to a tavern to find a better master. They join at the end in a resounding damnation of the sinner: “Evildoers always come to an evil end.”

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Jose Sacin, baritone, (Don Giovanni) a Peruvian “who is well-known locally in the Latino community as an opera singer with the stage presence of a lion and an impressive vocal range” was featured on national television as the cantor for the Papal Mass at Nationals Park last year. Sacin has performed with the Washington National Opera, Baltimore Opera, Annapolis Opera, the Caramoor International Festival and the Choral Arts Society of Washington. He is the founder of Zarzuela Di Si. Jose has performed recitals and opera in Costa Rica, Japan, Russia, Peru, Honduras and throughout the USA.

Robert Ritter, bass, (Leporello) has performed with Bel Cantanti Opera, The Washington Savoyards, The Victorian Lyric Opera and other Mid-Atlantic companies. His favorite roles include Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'amore*, Dr. Bartolo in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, and many in Gilbert & Sullivan operettas. Robert studies voice with Dr. Jane Tavernier, and is a rocket scientist in real-life. Robert's greatest fans are Donna and his two boys.

Heather Bingham, soprano, (Donna Elvira) has appeared on stages throughout the United States and Europe, performing gospel, jazz, opera and oratorio. Her opera roles include Giannetta in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and Adele in *Die Fledermaus* with Loudoun Lyric Opera, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Maria Callas in the East Coast premiere of Salerni's award winning opera *Tony Caruso's Last Broadcast*, Nichette in Washington DC's debut of Victor Herbert's *Madeleine*, Valencienne in Lehar's *The Merry Widow* and Yum-Yum in *The Mikado*.

Harlie Sponaugle, soprano, (Donna Anna - 5/15) most recently soloed in two new works by Paul Leavitt, the musical *Tom to Tenn.* and his *Requiem Mass*, performed the Countess in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. and sang and danced alongside Patti LuPone in Mark Blitzstein's *Regina* at the Kennedy Center. She is Music Minister at Community on the Hill and founded the

Society for American Art Song (www.AmericanArtSong.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting American song.

Jennifer Hosmer, soprano, (Donna Anna - 5/17) received her Bachelor's degree in vocal performance from Kent State University. She has performed such roles as the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin*. She has performed with the Crittenden Opera Studio, Opera Bel Canto, Eldebrooke Opera, Bel Cantanti Opera, Cantanti Singers, Arlington Opera Ensemble, and the Potomac Valley Opera Company.

Adriana Balzan, soprano (Zerlina) has sung in the most important theaters of her native Venezuela, like the impressive Teresa Carreño Theater in Caracas, the Municipal Theater of Caracas, and Teatro Baralt of Maracaibo, among others. Internationally Balzan has performed in Colombia, Peru, Costa Rica, Honduras, Spain and the USA. Her repertoire includes Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Violetta in *La traviata*, the Bat and the Chair in Ravel's *L'enfant et les Sortilèges*, among many others.

Cathy Teixeira, soprano, (Zerlina - cover) is a senior Bachelor of Music student at the University of Maryland studying under Linda Mabbs, and is the recipient of the Creative and Performing Arts Scholarship from the School of Music. She has performed with the Maryland Opera Studio, in *Così fan tutte*, *Eugene Onegin*, and played "Moth" in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This summer she will be a part of the vocal program at the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival.

John Turner, tenor, (Don Ottavio) has appeared in over thirty operas in recent years, most recently singing the roles of Basilio and Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Earlier this year he sang the role of Figaro in the stage play *Amadeus* at Greenbelt Center, and last fall sang Alexis in the G&S farce *The Sorcerer* in the VLOC festival. He has appeared as Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*, Gastone in *La traviata*, and in character roles in *Luisa Fernanda*, *La sonnambula*, *La bohème*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and many other productions. As an oratorio soloist at area churches, he has performed in Mozart's *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Faure's *Requiem*.