Viva Tosca!
by Jack Reeves

Live theater jumped off to a much-welcome return with the Austin Opera’s production of Tosca, held at the Circuit of Americas. The experience was, in a word, unique: the stirring (amplified) voices and orchestra competed with rain, engines, and the occasional overhead jetliner, while opera-goers munched bratwurst and sipped beer. We wouldn’t have changed a thing.

Did you know? Massive letters on stage originally read VIVA IL DUCE, reflecting the updated setting in fascist Italy. But, in a less-than-subtle twist (this is opera, after all), a late spring wind came and blew away IL DUCE, leaving only VIVA. Viva, indeed!

Houstonian soprano Latonia Moore was divine in the role of Tosca, and tenor Adam Smith and bass Aleksey Bogdanov delivered outstanding performances as Cavaradossi and Scarpia. Director David Lefkowich, conductor Timothy Myers, and the Austin Opera Orchestra rounded out the excellence with brilliant staging and music.

This staging of Tosca wasn’t just a bold expression of the power of opera — it was a testament to Austin Opera’s creativity, agility and audacity, and the spectacular depth of talent and passion that this organization brings to the art form.

Viva!
The Sweetness of Serenata

La Dolce Vita!

A standing ovation for all who made this year’s Serenata a triumph! Even the rainy weather couldn’t dull La Dolce Vita, as the Four Seasons was transformed into Italia and we honored Sarah and Ernest Butler.

To paraphrase the night’s auctioneer: Wow, it felt great to be together again!

Over $260,000 was raised against a target of $250,000, all of which will help support even more opera, education and art in the years ahead.

See more photos on Austin Opera’s Facebook page!
The Trials and Tribulations of *Tosca*

By Lissa Anderson

If you attended the performance of *Tosca* at the Circuit of the Americas, you were probably — pick one or more — amazed, shocked, horrified, or secretly pleased as the jealousy-driven diva threw herself from the battlements of the Castel Sant’ Angelo. No doubt the lovely Latonia Moore landed safely on a mattress backstage.

But then there’s the tale of another Tosca, either in New York or Chicago (it isn’t clear which), supposedly having treated the stage crew as lowly minions, who got her (literal) comeuppance when the crew swapped a trampoline for the mattress, and the diva sprung into the audience’s view several more times.

What is certain is that *Tosca* has been struck with more than its share of calamities. Three occurred just between Maria Callas and Tito Gobbi, who played Scarpia. In one performance, when she was about to stab him, Callas got too close to the candle, which set her wig on fire. Gobbi grabbed her and snuffed out the flames. “Thank you, Tito,” Callas whispered before stabbing him. Callas actually did draw blood from Gobbi during one performance, when the knife didn’t retract properly. Fortunately, it truly was just a flesh wound. Another time, Callas, who had poor eyesight but couldn’t wear contacts, couldn’t find the exit after she murdered Scarpia. Gobbi had to resurrect long enough to tell her how to make it off the stage.

Even the firing squad suffered a disaster. A San Francisco performance included poorly rehearsed supernumeraries who had been told to shoot the principal singer and then follow the principals out. To their surprise they found two people on stage instead of one. After much dithering they shot Tosca and were shocked when Cavaradossi fell. The only principal left standing for them to follow out was Tosca, so they dutifully leapt after her. Presumably, *Tosca* transitioned from tragedy to comedy that night.
Patricia (Pat) Rosen  
Membership Committee, Austin Opera Guild  
Interviewed by Tina Barrett

**Act I – Latin America**

Pat was born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras into a large family of physicians. Her first introduction to classical music and opera was from her four older brothers, who played records for her. When she was eight years old Pat attended her first opera, *Carmen*, at the Teatro Nacional de Costa Rica. That was the birth of her love of opera.

**Act II – Europe**

As a young girl Pat was sent to study in Europe where she took every opportunity to attend performances, up high in the opera house seats. Some memorable performances were at El Real, Madrid; La Monnaie, Brussels; Palais Garnier, Paris; La Scala, Milan; La Fenice, Venice; San Carlo, Naples, and as many opera festivals as possible. While studying romance languages and art history in Italy, at a performance of Verdi’s *I due Foscari*, Pat met Ira A. Rosen, a 6’ 5” medical student from New York City who adored opera and had quite an impressive collection of works—some 3,000. Together through 40 years of marriage they continued their love affair with opera, attending as many operatic events as possible. During that time Pat was a cultural attaché in Brussels and worked at the UN in Rome while Ira worked at the Policlinico Umberto I and as a physician for HIAS, a Jewish non-profit organization that provides aid to refugees.

**Act III – USA and Latin America**

Ira and Pat came to NYC in 1985, where Pat worked as international director for the school and office products industry. They became season ticket holders to the Met and Glimmerglass. After retirement they moved to Pat’s beloved mountains of Costa Rica. Because of her international travel for work Pat never missed an opportunity to attend performances abroad. She lovingly remembers telling Ira she had to go to Buenos Aires, for example, and he would immediately get on the computer to see what was playing at Teatro Colón. He would encourage her to make time and attend. Then by phone she would answer all his questions about the performance. Sadly, Ira passed away in 2017.

Pat joined the Austin Opera Guild in 2017 and has fallen in love with the people she has met there. She hopes to be part of this amazing group for many years to come. Pat loves being an opera ambassador at Austin Opera performances and working with Guild members and staff at the Information table.

Pat says, “I am looking forward to seeing my people again!”
President’s Letter
By Bill Wallace

Well, we made it through what might be generously called a “challenging” year. We are still here! Under the brilliant leadership of General Director and CEO Annie Burridge and her fantastic staff, Austin Opera has emerged in fine shape. They have kept us connected and entertained through lockdowns and cancellations.

We in the Austin Opera Guild navigated the year without our usual in-person gatherings and parties, but we remain steady in our love and support of our fine opera company. Let us hope that the coming year restores our ability to come together to celebrate, learn, and do ever more to lend our assistance to Austin Opera.

The past season has been full of surprises and milestones for the company. Perhaps most importantly, we welcome Timothy Myers as the Sarah and Ernest Butler Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor. Maestro Myers brings his splendid conducting and deep musical knowledge to Austin Opera.

The innovations created by Austin Opera staff have keep us engaged with the great art form. Live from Indy Terrace provided close-up views of singers, directors, and musicians. Virtual Enrichments helped us dig more deeply into opera. The formation of the Texas Opera Alliance enabled five opera companies to work and plan together. Opera at the drive-in was great fun and musically superb. An All-Star Concert brought internationally known singers to Austin for a great concert under the direction of Maestro Myers. This performance was selected for broadcast on PBS, which aired June 25, 2021. One of the stars, Ryan Speedo Green, was our artist-in-residence, inspiring many young people with his voice and his life story. In another tremendous “save,” our production of Tosca was moved to the amphitheater at Circuit of the Americas. This beloved Puccini thriller starred the great Texas-born soprano Latonia Moore.

The coming opera season promises more fine and innovative productions. I look forward to getting back in the theater with you to share the sounds and sights of our beloved art form, opera.

Sincerely,
Bill Wallace
Austin Opera Guild President
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