

Welcome

In the summer of 2006 I began a dream to allow my colleagues and me to take charge of our own musical destinies. I decided that we were capable enough, resourceful enough, passionate enough, talented enough and caring enough to prepare, organize, create and share our own opportunities with others.

Under this assumption, we have now produced five shows in two cities and at four different locations; employed fifty orchestra members, thirty five singers, four rehearsal pianists, three directors, two stage managers, two conductors, two graphic designers and one movement coach; engaged and retained the loyal help of three production designers, two language coaches, two costume designers, two reporters, one publicist and countless volunteers; trained and engaged three middle-schoolers in an opera chorus; and shared our product with hundreds of audience members from New York's Midtown to San Juan to Spanish Harlem.

I have a dream, indeed, that young artists will be considered worthy of their art, that they will receive the artistic forum that they need and deserve, and that opera will be within everyone's means.

I believe that with twenty five thousand dollars we can make something unique and breathtaking.

I believe that we can make a real difference.

Do you?

Laura Virella

Gratitude

This event would have not been possible without the great support of:

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MOORE BROTHERS WINE COMPANY

THE PLAYERS FOUNDATION

Zanetto

Music by PIETRO MASCAGNI
Libretto by GIOVANNI TARGIONI
& GUIDO MENASCI

Directed by JOHN MARTELLO Conducted by JORGE PARODI

Costumes by MARY BOVA

Lighting by TYLER LEARNED Set artwork by RENELIO MARÍN

Backdrop design by CRAIG NAPOLIELLO

Cast

(in order of vocal appearance)

Silvia MIRIAM BROWNING-NANCE
Zanetto LAURA VIRELLA

Orchestra

Violin I
PHILIP HSU
GABRYEL SMITH
PATTI KILROY

Violin II
JOSÉ PIETRI-COÍMBRE
CAMILLE ORTIZ

Viola
ERIC LEMMON
GABRIEL TAUBMAN

Cello
VERONICA PARRALES

Bass
VASYL FOMYTSKYI

Guitar
NILKO ANDREAS

Flute
EUGENIE CHAO
ELIZABETH GREEN

Oboe
JULIANNE SKONES

Clarinet
MELANIE WONG
DANIEL PADMOS

Bassoon
BEN BARON

Horn
BENJAMIN BRODY
AUDREY FLORES

A Note from the Maestro

Last spring I was asked to conduct the Israeli premier of a rarely performed opera by Mascagni. Without knowing anything about the piece—except the composer—I accepted with great excitement. *Cavalleria rusticana*, Mascagni's masterpiece and the only of his seventeen operas to remain in the standard repertoire, has always been one of my absolute favorite operas. I was hoping that *Zanetto*, the opera in question, would share the deep emotional charge, the human treatment of the characters, and the fluidity and beauty of the melodies with Mascagni's first opera. All my hopes were fulfilled! When I finally got a hold of the score and had the chance to play through it, I immediately fell in love with it. I could not leave it alone; I think I played it three times in a row—it's a good thing that is not a lengthy score!

There are only two characters whose personalities are shaped by a concise libretto and Mascagni's heartfelt and honest music. There are no 'fillers' of any kind: the story flows evenly and after less than an hour we feel that we know—and care for—Zanetto and Silvia. And what is most striking in the story, in the characters and especially in the music, is the sincerity of all of them. When the curtain closes, we do not feel that we have witnessed a performance, but rather that we have shared a life-changing encounter of two new friends of ours.

Last summer when Laura, Miriam and I were making arrangements for a production of *The Rape of Lucretia* we did here at The Players—our first and very successful project together- I played the score for them (only once this time) because I thought it would be the perfect piece for them and their company: the orchestration is rich but not large, there are only two characters and their voice types fit each of them perfectly, and I thought that having John's humanistic stage direction would be the perfect way to bring all the pieces wonderfully to life. I am so glad they all agreed and that we are able to share this gem with you.

Jorge Parodi

A Note from the Director

This opera is slightly over 40 minutes long. The plot is very simple. Its emotional content is dense and complex.

Silvia is an aging courtesan who has reached that age when she starts to sum up the meaning of her life. When we first see her, she is lamenting that she has never found true love and fears that she has become incapable of it. She lives alone in her villa overlooking Florence. A young troubadour named Zanetto enters her garden and sleeps on her bench. Silvia awakens him. He sees in her his ideal woman. She sees something in him, too: The boy that got away? Her ideal?

Zanetto wants to move in with her. Silvia conceals her identity and says she is a poor widow who can't afford to take him in. Zanetto asks about the famous Silvia he has heard so much about and asks for this woman's help in finding Silvia. Silvia dissuades him; he relents; she points him toward the dawn (away from Florence); he leaves; Silvia discovers that she can still be touched. The opera is over.

Pietro Mascagni composed this brief work in 1896, six years after his masterwork *Cavalleria rusticana*. It is based on a French play that was popular in the late 19th century called *Le passant* by Coppée, a successful vehicle for Sarah Bernhardt. Mascagni infuses it with lyricism and wonderful melodic moments and, for Silvia, the idea that selfless love may be the most perfect and satisfying love.

As we watch this opera unfold tonight at The Players, or in the regional opera stages of 19th century Italy, or on the stage of the Old Met when the composer himself conducted this piece in 1902, we experience what all audiences experience when watching this or any other solid work: universal truth. In this opera, the universal truth is that, like Zanetto, we are all looking for love. For love, as Silvia discovers, is what makes us complete.

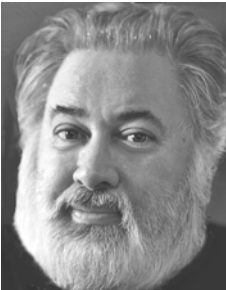
John Martello

Meet the Artists



Reviewed as having “the most expressive conducting hands since Stokowski’s,” (New York Daily News) Argentinean conductor Jorge Parodi has worked at several prestigious opera companies, including the Teatro Colón (Buenos Aires), Opera Company of Philadelphia, Connecticut Grand Opera and Lake George Opera Festival, collaborating with Opera Tampa and the Orchestra of St. Luke’s.

Mr. Parodi is the Music Director of the Undergraduate Opera Theater at Manhattan School of Music, where he recently conducted Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* and Gay/Britten’s *The Beggar’s Opera* to critical acclaim. He is also the Vocal Coach of The Juilliard School’s premiere Pre-College Division and a faculty member of the International Vocal Arts Institute, one of the world’s foremost opera training programs. Highlights of his long association with IVAI include conducting the Israeli premieres of Poulenc’s *La Voix Humaine* and Mascagni’s *Zanetto*. He is currently a faculty member of V.O.I.C.Experience, a vocal workshop under the direction of Maria Zouves and Sherrill Milnes. A prizewinner at the Bienal de Arte of Buenos Aires, Mr. Parodi completed studies in Conducting and Piano Performance at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música of Buenos Aires. He holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Michigan.



John Martello has been an actor, producer and director for over 30 years. Off-Broadway, Mr. Martello produced the musical revue *Daugherty & Field Off-Broadway* which ran for a year and was nominated for the Outer Critics Circle Award and the acclaimed one-man show *Damon Runyon’s Tales of Broadway* which Mr. Martello also wrote and performed. As Executive Director of The Players, Mr. Martello has produced hundreds of

presentations over the last 15 years, including evenings honoring Jason Robards, Julie Harris, Christopher Plummer, Gregory Peck, Peter O’Toole, Tony Bennett, Angela Lansbury, Gerald Schoenfeld and dozens of other theatrical luminaries. In addition to his first full opera, *Zanetto*, his current project is producing Simon Grays *The Old Masters* starring Brian Murray and Marian Seldes for a future Broadway production.



Miriam Browning-Nance received a Bachelor of Arts in music, theatre and religion from Coe College and then went on to attain a graduate performance diploma in classical voice from The Peabody Conservatory.

With many years of experience in managing diverse areas of the arts, Miriam has succeeded both on stage and off stage. Her collaborations have led her to organizations as diverse as the Everyman Theatre in Baltimore, Fells Point Corner Theatre, The Meyerhoff Symphony Hall stage, The Baltimore Shakespeare Theatre, Washington Summer Opera Theatre and Project Opera of Manhattan.

Her silky clear soprano timber has brought great elegance and finesse to roles such as Contessa Almaviva, Pamina, Naiade and Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Greta Fiorentino in *Street Scene* and Natalie/Valencienne in *The Merry Widow*.



Mezzo-Soprano *sanjuanera* Laura Virella holds in Bachelor of Music from the Peabody Conservatory and a Master in Music from Manhattan School of Music.

Her passion and commitment on stage have attained much acclaim, inspiring reviews as diverse as "Laura Virella's Carmen could not be more sensual without inviting a police raid" (*The Baltimore Sun*, 2002), "Virella, at a very early age, already communicates with transparent sincerity, the fervor of this marvelous text of the Trinity Doxology," (Luis Enrique Juliá, *El Nuevo Día*, San Juan, PR, 2001) and "All, especially the rich mezzo-soprano Laura Virella, are gifted singers" (*Washington Times*, 2005).

Opera roles include Carmen, Rosina, Cherubino, Bianca (*The Rape of Lucretia*), Zanetto, Second and Third Ladies (*Die Zauberflöte*), Rosette (*Manon*), Giovanna (*Rigoletto*), Nancy Ford (*The Village Singer*) and Paquette (*Candide*). She has also crossed over into the non-classical world, performing in *Beehive: A Motown Revue* and incarnating both female characters in The Everyman Theatre's production of *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*.

Pre-Show Entertainment

We would also like to thank the following artists who have worked with us in the past and have donated their time to us tonight:

Sopranos

MEAGAN BRUS
CHRISTINE FLEMING
GIOVANNA REYES
SARA STEWART

Mezzo-Soprano

SARA FANUCCHI

Tenor

STEVEN MERRILL

Baritones

ADAM CAVAGNARO
JORELL WILLIAMS

Piano

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