



FLORENTINE OPERA
COMPANY



2010-
2011
SEASON



ANNUAL
REPORT



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Building on the enthusiasm of our 2009-2010 season which included the Midwest premiere and recording of *Elmer Gantry*, new productions of *Tosca* and *Rigoletto* and the opening of the Wayne & Kristine Lueders Florentine Opera Center, the Florentine Opera's 77th season spanned five centuries of opera, opening with the world premiere of *Río de Sangre* and closing with a Florentine debut: a double-bill of English Baroque works *Venus & Adonis* and *Dido & Aeneas*.

I am pleased to report that the Florentine Opera is taking decisive steps to ensure a strong foundation for the long-term success of the company, including expense reductions and efforts to increase both earned and contributed revenue. The Board of Directors implemented a three-year strategic plan that focuses on establishing a sustainable, long-term operating model. In addition to compelling the organization to budget realistically, reduce expenses and manage cash flow by requiring approval of budgets two years out, the plan also endorses continued emphasis on producing operas that honor the traditional art form, as well as creating fresh takes on classic favorites, introducing American works to our audience, and showcasing opera's beginnings with selections from the Baroque era.

Our efforts, both onstage and around the community, would never be possible without the contributions of many. I am grateful to General Director William Florescu and the dedicated administrative staff, all of my fellow Board members and our devoted Florentine Opera Club for the vital role that each play in our continued success. In addition, I am pleased to thank our generous donors, particularly the production, performance and event sponsors highlighted in this report. We are grateful, also, for the support provided by the United Performing Arts Fund, Wisconsin Arts Board, Milwaukee County CAMPAC, and the City of Milwaukee Arts Board.

It has been my continued honor to serve as President of the Board of Directors, and I warmly thank you for your ongoing support.

Clay G. Nesler

A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR



Our 2010-2011 season saw numerous milestones: the stunning *Río de Sangre*, our first world premiere; a bubbly production of Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, featuring a hilariously talented cast; a double-bill of *Venus & Adonis* and *Dido & Aeneas* that was a hit with critics and audiences; and *The Golden Days*, a concert presented by our Studio Artists showcasing American operetta favorites. What's more, our exploration of new repertoire led to the release of the Company's first commercial recordings: *Elmer Gantry* on the Naxos label and *Río de Sangre* on Albany Records.

This season also enhanced our continued efforts to engage new audiences. In a time of nationally declining opera attendance, *Río de Sangre* attracted more than 300 people who had never been to a Florentine performance, while the Baroque double-bill attracted another 200 new patrons. In addition, our community engagement programs reached more people than ever before. *The Billy Goats Gruff* introduced nearly 13,000 young children to the art form. Programming for older students and adults offered diverse experiences, from the High School Masterclass Program for budding young singers to SPARK!, a collaboration with the Milwaukee Public Museum for people living with Alzheimer's disease and their caretakers.

We are always grateful to our donors and champions, but especially in these challenging times, I sincerely thank every single patron and donor—your support truly does make a difference. I would also like to particularly acknowledge Clay Nesler, our wonderful Board President, for his outstanding leadership. Additionally, I am grateful to our Board of Directors, Life Directors and the Milwaukee Florentine Opera Club for their unwavering support. Our many relationships within the performing arts community are vital to our success, and I thank the United Performing Arts Fund, President Paul Matthews and the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (particularly Vice President & Chief Program Officer Larry Tucker) for their outstanding partnerships. Finally, I thank our wonderful administrative and artistic staff.

With a commitment to engage and entertain both our longtime and new patrons, and our many collaborations with partner organizations both locally and across the country, I feel we are well-placed to tackle the future. I thank you again for your support and look forward to sharing this continuing journey with you.

William Florescu

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WORLD PREMIERE
BY DON DAVIS
OCTOBER 22, 23 & 24, 2010

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FRIENDS OF MR. DAVIS

CREATORS
Don Davis, Composer
Kate Gale, Librettist
Alicia Partnoy, Translator

CAST
Guido LeBron, *Christian Delacruz*
Kerry Walsh, *Antonia*
John Duykers, *Jesus Guajardo*
Ava Pine, *Blanca*
Vale Rideout, *Igneo*
Mabel Ledo, *Estella*
Rubin Casas, *Bishop Ruiz*
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Florentine Opera Chorus
Paula Suezzi, Stage Director
Joseph Rescigno, Principal Conductor

The Florentine Opera's first-ever world premiere production featured a vibrant score by Emmy Award-winning composer Don Davis and a story conceived by Los Angeles author and librettist Kate Gale. This compelling tale of political turmoil in the face of idealism was also the first opera in the Florentine's history sung in Spanish, featuring translations by Alicia Partnoy. An international cast directed by Paula Suezzi joined the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Maestro Joseph Rescigno. Choreography by Simone Ferro and stunning set and lighting design by Noele Stollmack, along with striking costumes by Holly Payne, brought the production to life.

"The Florentine's production team, almost all Milwaukee people, put on a world-class show....*Río de Sangre* isn't perfect... but it's daring, original, creative, ambitious and, at times, thrilling. *Río*, with all its faults, is the sort of thing the Florentine ought to be doing."

-Tom Strini, *ThirdCoast Digest*

"Give great credit to this hardy regional company, the sixth oldest in the country, as it opens its 77th season. In an economically straitened era when few companies, large or small, are presenting anything adventurous, Florentine Opera deserves praise for producing its first ever commissioned work, in Spanish no less."

-Lawrence Johnson, *The Classical Review* (Chicago)

"Commissioning an opera and staging its world premiere is one of the boldest and most challenging things any arts group - in any genre - can do....if any art form is to survive, it has to have new works. That's why William Florescu and the Florentine Opera should be applauded."

-Paul Kosidowski, *Milwaukee Magazine/Culture Club*



Photos: Richard Brodzeller ©2010.

TRAVEL WISCONSIN .COM The Florentine Opera's production of *Río de Sangre* was the recipient of a JEM Grant from the Wisconsin Board of Tourism.

RÍO DE SANGRE GALA - OCTOBER 16, 2010 CATHY & MARIO COSTANTINI AND KATE & DON WILSON, CO-CHAIRS

A festive evening filled with Latin flair at the Wayne & Kristine Lueders Florentine Opera Center and La Lune Collection Factory was the perfect way to celebrate the Florentine Opera's first world premiere! Guests including Emmy Award-winning composer Don Davis and stars of the acclaimed international cast mingled by the light of enchanting luminarias. Cuban classical guitarist Rene Izquierdo and the Stas Venglevski Tango Trio performed tuneful melodies and kept the dance floor full, as guests indulged in delicacies provided by Antigua Latin American Restaurant and sipped a signature blend of "Río de Sangria," a selection of South American wines and beer (courtesy of MillerCoors).

Artist participation sponsored by Bucyrus Foundation.
Thank you to our event sponsors:



the Italian Girl in Algiers

L'italiana in Algeri

BY GIOACCHINO ROSSINI
MARCH 18, 19 & 20, 2011

CAST
Daniela Mack, *Isabella* (March 18 & 20)
Alessandra Volpe, *Isabella* (March 19)
Robert McPherson, *Lindoro*
Kevin Glavin, *Mustafa*
Daniel Belcher, *Taddeo*
Erica Schuller, *Elvira*
Julia Hardin, *Zulma*
Scott Johnson, *Haly*
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Florentine Opera Chorus
William Theisen, Stage Director
Joseph Rescigno, Principal Conductor



In March 2011, the Florentine Opera presented Gioacchino Rossini's whimsical comedy, *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, for only the second time in its 77-season history. Audiences were transported on an exotic journey to a land of magnificent palaces, swashbuckling pirates and lavish harems by a nationally-acclaimed cast of singers, directed by William Theisen, as Maestro Joseph Rescigno led the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in Rossini's frothy and exuberant score.

Photos: Richard Brodzeller©2010.



"Florentine's 'Italian Girl' has it all...combines musical finesse with a spot-on sense of theater and enough stagecraft to enhance, but not overpower, the story and music."

-Elaine Schmidt, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"A likeable and inventive production..."

-Rick Walters, *Shepherd Express*

"The entire production was a musical triumph and comic delight....Score yet another win for the Florentine and for Milwaukee's performing arts scene."

-Harry Cherkinian, *Wisconsin Gazette*

An alluring world of gods and goddesses, passionate love and tragic consequences enchanted audiences in May 2011 as the Florentine Opera presented an unprecedented and well-received double-bill of two timeless Baroque works directed by General Director William Florescu: *Venus & Adonis*, the earliest surviving British opera, and *Dido & Aeneas*, the first English operatic masterpiece.

The intimacy of Vogel Hall's jewel-box theater provided the perfect setting for audiences to experience the lush melodies and breathtaking scenes in an authentic Baroque-inspired setting.



Photos: Kathy Wittman, Ball Square Films©2011.

"Effectively closes the Florentine Opera's 77th season on a graceful note."

-Lawrence Johnson, *The Classical Review* (Chicago)

"Florentine's Baroque double-bill is pitch perfect!"

-Tom Strini, *ThirdCoast Digest*

"Milwaukee's Florentine Opera consistently provides the most interesting programming of any opera company in the Midwest."

-William Weinke, *Channel3000.com* (Madison)

Venus & Adonis Dido & Aeneas

BY JOHN BLOW & HENRY PURCELL
MAY 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21 & 22, 2011

CAST
Greer Davis, *Venus/Belinda*
Patricia Risley, *Dido*
Craig Verm, *Adonis/Aeneas*
Ian Howell, *Cupid/Spirit*
Jean Broekhuizen, *Huntsman/Sorceress*
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Florentine Opera Chorus
William Florescu, Stage Director
Christopher Larkin, Conductor



FLORENTINE OPERA STUDIO

The Florentine Opera Studio provides season-long, comprehensive artist-in-residence employment for talented singers beginning their professional careers, while serving the mainstage, education and outreach goals of the Florentine Opera Company. The Wayne & Kristine Lueders Florentine Opera Center serves as the Florentine Studio Program's main rehearsal space.



2010-2011 Studio Artists

Erica Schuller, soprano
Julia Elise Hardin, mezzo soprano
Matthew Richardson, tenor
Scott Johnson, baritone

Studio Program Highlights:

- Roles in all three mainstage productions
- Performed in *Messiah* with Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
- *The Golden Days*, a concert featuring the Studio Artists performing operetta favorites
- *The Billy Goats Gruff*, a touring children's opera performed for nearly 13,000 students
- Opera Scenes program, presented April 9, 2011
- Masterclasses with Erie Mills and Frank Kelley
- Ongoing individual coaching with Florentine artistic staff
- Served as mentors and vocal coaches in High School Masterclass program and for students with Milwaukee Children's Choir
- Performed the National Anthem at a Milwaukee Brewer's game
- Community appearances at venues around the region



Photo: Richard Brodzeller©2011



The Golden Days - November 14, 2010

The Golden Days concert showcased the delightful world of operetta, featuring composers such as Sigmund Romberg, Rudolf Friml and Victor Herbert, and pieces such as *Babes in Toyland*, *The Student Prince*, *The Vagabond King*, *Naughty Marietta* and *Show Boat*.



Residency of the 2010-2011 Florentine Opera Studio Artists sponsored by Marianne and Sheldon Lubar.

Photos: Zachary-John Reinardy©2010

EDUCATION & OUTREACH



The Florentine Opera's education programming served more students in the 2010-11 season than ever before through strategic partnerships with community organizations as well as our long-term school partners. More than 13,000 students experienced opera in 2010-11:

360 received premium opera tickets, free of charge.

12,545 saw *The Billy Goats Gruff* touring opera through **64** performances in **49** venues.

20 aspiring young singers participated in the High School Masterclass.

60 middle school students learned about wigs and makeup through Opera Inside Out.

128 children were treated to a specially-crafted Spanish-language program through a partnership with Latino Arts Inc. and the United Community Center. **116** of these same students were also able to attend a World Premiere performance of *Río de Sangre*.

29 members of the Milwaukee Children's Choir participated in a masterclass with the Florentine Studio Artists.

60 children living in Milwaukee's Riverwest neighborhood attended a collaborative workshop at the Woodland Pattern Book Gallery and the Wayne and Kristine Lueders Florentine Opera Center.



The Florentine Opera Company's touring education program, *The Billy Goats Gruff*, visited the following venues:

- 95th St. School
- Academy of Accelerated Learning
- Alexander Mitchell Integrated Arts School
- Aquinas Academy
- Bethesda Elementary
- Betty Brinn Children's Museum
- Brookfield Public Library
- Canterbury Elementary
- Clinton Elementary
- College Park Elementary
- Cooper Elementary
- Dimensions of Learning
- Elmwood Elementary School
- Erin School
- Fairview Charter K8 School
- Garland Elementary
- German Immersion School
- Glen Park Elementary
- Greenfield Bilingual School
- Highland View Elementary
- Hmong American Peace Academy
- Hope School
- Immanuel Lutheran School
- Kosciuszko Montessori
- Lake Country Academy
- Lake Park Lutheran Church
- Louisa May Alcott School
- Manitoba K8 School
- Morgandale School
- New Berlin Public Library
- Oconomowoc Arts Center
- Prairie View Elementary
- Ronald McDonald House
- Richards Elementary
- Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts
- St. Joe's Catholic School
- St. Marcus Lutheran School
- St. Mary's School
- Steinway Piano Gallery
- Taylor Prairie School
- Thorson Elementary
- Thurston Woods Campus
- Trowbridge Elementary
- Urban Day School
- US Grant School
- Victory K8/Italian Immersion Schools
- Wauwatosa Public Library
- Whittier School



2010-11 AT A GLANCE

ADULTS

- Opera Insights
- Talk Opera
- Woodland Pattern lecture featuring librettist Kate Gale
- Wilson Center Artist Dialogues
- Season Sampler
- Opera Scenes Showcase
- Florentine at the Lake
- Love at the Foundry
- Carols at the Lake
- Opera After Dark
- SPARK! with the Milwaukee Public Museum
- Gathering on the Green

STUDENTS

- The Billy Goats Gruff* tour
- GET OPERA
- Opera Inside Out
- High School Masterclass
- Milwaukee Children's Choir Masterclass
- Kidz Days in the City with the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts

SPOTLIGHT ON BELA AND JULIE MAROTI

Bela Maroti and his wife, Julie, have been long-time supporters of opera in Milwaukee. Bela served on the Florentine's Board of Directors from 1997 until 2009, when he was elected to become a Life Director. Both Bela and Julie were raised in families for whom classical music and opera were a top priority. Bela's great-grandfather was the first professional music critic in Hungary, his grandmother a concert pianist, and his parents ardent supporters of weekly "musical evenings" with their children. Julie was a semi-professional opera singer in her youth. Bela and Julie recently established the Maroti Family Education Fund, an endowment designated to support the Florentine's GET OPERA program. Earnings from the fund will be used to sponsor premium orchestra-level tickets for area middle and high school students, making opera accessible to the next generation of arts patrons regardless of their economic status. "Many children today are raised in families that do not share classical music and opera. We wanted to introduce young students to opera early on so they may develop an appreciation for it," Bela explains. Because of their generosity, more than 360 students attended an opening night performance of a mainstage production in the 2010-2011 season, free of charge, experiencing opera for the first time.



"It was wonderful to meet you last Thursday at Latino Arts. Thanks again for allowing our school to participate in such a well-organized [GET OPERA] program. For the rest of the day, the teachers reported hearing the students humming "Besame Mucho" while they were working at their desks. The program captured the many moods of opera, and I was amazed to see how naturally our students connected with the opera singers, especially during the comedic song from *The Barber of Seville*."
- Andrew Hurie, La Causa Charter School



Florentine Camerata is an LGBT-friendly affinity group that presents a variety of opera-related social events, with a focus on providing audience education and generating enthusiasm for opera within the community.

During the 2010-11 Season, the group held three "Meet the Artist" Sunday socials at The Room, featuring food from Miss Katie's Diner. Those attending had a unique chance to meet stars of opera mainstage productions and participate in the beloved "Bartop Q&A," while enjoying live performances from the Studio Artists and an inside glimpse at each production.

Thank you to the 2010-2011 season
Florentine Opera Camerata Media Sponsor:

Thank you to the official meeting
place of Florentine Opera Camerata:



June 3, 2011

hosted by Cathy & Mario Costantini and Bill & Roberta Florescu
featuring a menu created by Chef Joe Bartolotta

The tastes and sounds of the Italian countryside came to life in the heart of Milwaukee at the Wayne & Kristine Lueders Florentine Opera Center as guests enjoyed an unforgettable evening at Pasta & Puccini. Traditional Italian folk music, Italian wine and beer and delicious antipasti were enjoyed before guests sat down to a delectable *al fresco* family-style dinner in the courtyard created especially for them by Chef Joe Bartolotta. From *primi* to *dolce*, Italy was but a mouthful away as the Studio Artists performed a selection of favorite Italian tunes eliciting the hills of Tuscany, the canals of Venice, the songs of Naples, the art of Florence and the history of Rome.

Thank you to our sponsors:

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MILWAUKEE FLORENTINE OPERA CLUB 2010-2011

Linda Lee Seroka
President

The Milwaukee Florentine Opera Club, Inc. is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization to promote interest in and support of the Florentine Opera Company. The Club and the Company work in close harmony to cultivate the appreciation of opera in Wisconsin and surrounding stages. The Florentine Opera thanks the Opera Club for their generous support!

FLORENTINE OPERA CHORUS 2010-2011

Laura Albright-Wengler
Julie Alonzo-Calteaux
James Barany
Danielle Braus
Nicholas Brighty
Jillian Hansen Bruss
Daniel Brylow
Sarah Butler
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Will Johnson
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David Larsen
Nancy McIntire
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Randolph Montijo
Kristin Ngchee
Angela Nieman
Dennis R. Parker
Jarad Parker
Kathryn Peperkorn
Dale Porter
Timothy Rebers
Darwin J. Sanders
David D. Schlomer
Timothy W. Schmidt
Jonathan Shroerlucke
John A. Stumpf
Brianna Sura
Erin Sura
Cindy Thomas
Jessica Lee Timman
Peter C. Voigt
Margaret Wendt
Tracy L. Wildt
Kristin Wrolstad

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES - OPERATING FUND

June 30, 2011 (unaudited)

REVENUE:	
Earned revenue	420,579
Investment interest & gains	488,965
Support:	
United Performing Arts Fund	689,006
Milwaukee Florentine Opera Club	35,100
Government	54,720
Annual fund donations	1,115,624
In kind donations	60,995
	1,955,445
Total revenue and support	2,864,989
EXPENSES:	
Production expenses	1,976,519
Other	1,275,616
Total expenses	3,252,134
Net loss	(387,145)

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

June 30, 2011 (unaudited)

ASSETS	
Cash	26,180
Investments	2,893,748
Receivables & prepaid expenses	603,605
Property and equipment, net	161,485
Total assets	3,685,018
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	35,858
Line of credit	571,000
Advance ticket sales	195,578
Total liabilities	802,436
Net assets:	
Operating fund	638,014
Temporarily restricted	626,700
Endowment	1,617,868
Total net assets	2,882,583
Total liabilities and net assets	3,685,018

ANNUAL CAMPAIGN DONORS

The Florentine Opera relies on its annual fund donors for continued financial support. Thank you for your generosity and constancy during the Company's 2010-11 season.

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SPOTLIGHT ON NITA SOREF

Nita Soref has been sponsoring productions and individual performing artists since joining the Board of Directors in 2007. "When I moved downtown I wanted to become more involved in the arts, so I joined the Board at the Florentine so I could make a personal connection with the opera," Nita explained. Nita's generosity has supported Swedish soprano Erica Sunnegårdh's critically-acclaimed performance as the title role in *Salome* (2008) as well as Georgia Jarman's performance as Gilda in *Rigoletto* (2010). In the 2010-11 season, Nita Soref was the Production Sponsor for the Baroque double-bill of *Venus & Adonis* and *Dido & Aeneas*.



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ESTATE GIFTS

The following people generously provided bequests to the Florentine Opera. We commemorate these departed friends who have honored us with their gifts.

James & Dorothy Bamberger	Milena Pesek
Dr. Thomas R. DuBuque	Jeanette Rades
Charles and Dorothy Farina	Charlotte Schumacher
Edith Frentzel	Neal Seegert
Avis M. Heller	Dr. H. Gladys Spear
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Mary S. Kelly	Leo Suycott
Arthur Kohasky	Audrey Wegner
Irene Laning Mason	Sadie Weiner
Mary Lou Mottram	June Vrsata
	Edward Zauner

2010-11 SEASON UNDERWRITERS

RIO DE SANGRE
Production Nancy & Terry Anderson
The Herzfeld Foundation
Fri. Oct. 23, 2010 Florentine Opera Board of Directors
Friends of Don Davis

THE ITALIAN GIRL IN ALGIERS

Production Mary Ann & Charles LaBahn
Fri. Mar. 18, 2011 Mary Ann & Lloyd Gerlach
Sun. Mar. 20, 2011 Mary & Ross Read
The Chapman Foundation

VENUS & ADONIS/DIDO & AENEAS

Production Nita Soref
Sun. May 15, 2011 Scott Patulski & Kristine Krause
Wed. May 18, 2011 Briggs & Stratton
Sun. May 22, 2011 James & Pati Ericson
Patricia Risley Marie Z. Uihlein Artist Fund

2010-11 STUDIO ARTIST PROGRAM

Residency sponsored by Marianne & Sheldon Lubar

SPOTLIGHT ON

MARY ANN AND CHARLES LaBAHN

Mary Ann LaBahn has served on the Florentine Board as both an active member and a Life Director for nearly two decades. She and her husband Charles have been among the Florentine Opera's most generous champions, helping to bring many operas to our stage including one of Mary Ann's favorites, our new production of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in 2004. This season their sponsorship of *The Italian Girl in Algiers* brought delight to audiences and critics alike.



Mrs. Maria Ullenberg
Theodore and Martha Waters
Mr. Henry J. Wellner
Ms. Joan Wells
Mr. Frank R. Wozniak
Marilyn Zwissler

The Florentine is grateful for donations at all levels. Thank you to our donors of gifts up to \$149; we regret there is not space to list them all.

ANELLO SOCIETY MEMBERS

The Anello Society is named after the founder of the Florentine Opera, John David Anello. This society is the group of special people who have provided for a gift to the Florentine Opera in their wills or other estate plans. They will furnish funds to help perpetuate the work of this organization for the enjoyment of future generations.

Anonymous (6)
Clair Anderson
Mr. and Mrs. John Anello, Jr.
Lisa and John D. Anello III
Robert Byrne and Suzan Hester

James and Terry O'Shaughnessy
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Cynthia Krueger Post
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Rescigno
Dolores Ruetz
Michael and Jeanne Schmitz

SPOTLIGHT ON NANCY AND TERRY ANDERSON

Nancy and Terry Anderson, production sponsors for the 2010 World Premiere of *Rio de Sangre*, have been actively involved at the Florentine for twelve years. In their own words: "Our favorite opera is *Turandot*. We support the Florentine because this music does so much for all ages. Music helps our left and right brains to interact, to see the world accurately and form mental pictures of things. It helps us to think creatively and to solve problems by imagining various solutions. But most of all, this music is about joy, of feeling moved and enriched because music expresses feelings words cannot. That's essential to the whole human experience." The Florentine is grateful to Nancy and Terry Anderson for their ongoing generosity and support.



SPOTLIGHT ON MARIANNE AND SHEL LUBAR

Marianne and Shel Lubar underwrote the residency of the 2010-2011 Florentine Opera Studio Artists. Throughout her 29 years on the Florentine Opera Board of Directors, Marianne Lubar's unflinching belief in the importance of arts education for young people has been a driving force behind the growth of the Florentine's education and outreach programs. In Marianne's words, "We sometimes think that art is a luxury, but it's the most important thing in our lives. It provides continuity with the past and a way to look at our lives today." The Florentine is grateful for the Lubars' generous support of the Florentine Opera Studio Artists.



THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS:



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William Florescu, General Director

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