ABOUT VCU OPERA

Founded in 1950 by L. Wayne Batty, VCU Opera has been directed by Melanie Kohn Day since 1983. In 2008, Dr. Kenneth Wood joined the VCU Voice faculty and additionally assumed the position of Stage Director for VCU Opera. Between November 2011 and November 2015, VCU Opera was the recipient of four national awards from the NOA-National Opera Association: 2nd Place for Humperdinck's HANSEL & GRETEL, 1st Place for Menotti's THE OLD MAID & THE THIEF, 3rd place for the opera scenes competition for Bizet's CARMEN quintet and 1st Place for Gilbert & Sullivan’s THE GONDOLIERS.

VCU Opera has the longest-running tradition of annual full-scale productions in the state of Virginia and is proud of its outstanding reputation as an opera training program. Each year there is a fully-staged production of opera scenes and arias as well as a full-scale production featuring scenery and costumes and presented in collaboration with the VCU Symphony.

VCU Opera’s mission is to cast undergraduate students in appropriate roles from the mainstream repertoire. We specialize in traditionally styled productions utilizing where possible our extensive collection of costumes, wigs and props.

With a significant emphasis on the holistic training of the complete “singer-actor,” VCU Opera has prepared numerous students for scholarships to the nation’s finest conservatories and university graduate programs, as well as for prestigious summer festivals in the USA and abroad and for Resident Artist positions with regional opera companies throughout the USA. Many VCU Opera alumni have gone on to enjoy highly successful careers performing in the world’s greatest opera houses.
VCU OPERA & VCU OPERA ORCHESTRA

PRESENT

THE MEDIUM
Gian Carlo Menotti

&

LA CAMBIALE DI MATRIMONIO
Gioacchino Rossini

Saturday, April 30, 2016 • 7 p.m.
Sunday, May 1, 2016 • 7 p.m.

Co-Directors
Melanie Kohn Day & Kenneth Wood

Conductor
Daniel Myssyk

Set Designer
Mercedes Schaum

Costume Coordinators/Designers
Ivy Austin & Leslie Winn

Lighting Designer
Curt Blankenship

This production has been generously underwritten in part by Emerson & Kathy Hughes, Dr. Sonia Vlahcevic, Dr. Velimir Luketic and Mr. Jay Beville. VCU Opera is so grateful for their support!
THE MEDIUM
Performed in English with English Supertitles
Setting: Madame Flora’s parlor – a squalid room in a flat on the outskirts of a great European city
Time: late 1930s

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Monica, daughter of Madame Flora
Ella Mort
Toby, a mute gypsy boy
Alan Chavez
Madame Flora (Baba)
Margaret Mayes
Mrs. Gobineau
Emily Nesbitt, Saturday night
Mr. Gobineau
Emma-Claire Polich, Sunday night
Mrs. Nolan
Forrest Glass

There will be a short pause between Act I and Act II.
**Please be advised: Simulated gunshots will be fired for this production.
Total running time: 58 minutes
INTERMISSION: 15 minutes

LA CAMBIALE DI MATRIMONIO
"The Marriage Contract" – an opera in one act
Performed in Italian with English Supertitles
Setting: England, The house of Tobia Mill — office and storage area
Time: early 1800s

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Tobia Mill, a wealthy English merchant
Forrest Glass
Fanny, Tobia Mill’s daughter
Brenna Miller
Edoardo Milfort, Fanny’s Beloved
DeVonte Saunders
Slook, a wealthy merchant from the American colonies
Alan Chavez
Norton, cashier to Tobia Mill
Evan Coldiron
Clarina, chambermaid to Fanny
Jaylin Brown

SUPERNUMERARIES

Isachetto, livery servant
Matt Evangelisto
Salomone, valet to Tobia Mill
Sean King
Lorenzo, the cook
Shyheim Hinnant
Maid servant
Georgia Cotter
Maid servant
Savannah Whittenburg
Maid servant
Hayleigh Wilson
Harpsichordist for Recitatives
Charles Lindsey

Total running time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

"GRAZIE MILLE!" VCU Opera would like to express profound appreciation to Emerson & Kathy Hughes, Dr. Sonia Vlahcevic, Dr. Velimir Luketic and Mr. Jay Beville for their ongoing dedication to and support of our productions.

SPECIAL THANKS TO Roland Karnatz, Curt Blankenship, Mercedes Schaum, Leslie Winn and Ivy Austin, who have dreamt, planned, organized, constructed, and created the magic for us! We could not exist without their vision, talent, expertise, and dedication!

SPECIAL THANKS ALSO TO Dr. Darryl Harper, Chair of VCU Music; Linda Johnston; Dr. Aaron Anderson, Theatre VCU; Cynthia Donnell; Amy Sheets; Ron Keller, Chair of Theatre VCU; Al Williamson, Theatre VCU; Leland Lew; Sue Griffin, Sarah Grady and Marcia Miller Hailey of The Virginia Repertory Theatre; Dr. Justin Alexander; Ric Withers and Ary Weldy of Wythken Printing; Prof. Sterling Hundley, VCU Communication Arts & Design

VCU OPERA was awarded four prizes in the past three years from The National Opera Association for our productions: two 1st place awards, one 2nd place and one 3rd place! We thank our wonderful orchestra – we are so very proud of our students and design/tech team!

Proud to Support
VCU Department of Music

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latter now reads out to the astonished Norton the promissory note by which Slook has commissioned Mill to find him a wife, stipulating all the necessary qualities. It is a "deal" of the greatest importance and Mill, without at all consulting the young lady in question, has decided that his own daughter Fanny shall be the "merchandise." Norton tries in vain to dissuade him: Mill intends to combine business with pleasure in marrying his daughter to the rich American. When the two men have left, Fanny comes in with her chosen beloved, Edoardo Milfort. As Edoardo's financial circumstances leave something to be desired, Fanny has never confessed her love to her father: the two young people are awaiting the arrival of Edoardo's rich uncle before confiding their love.

Norton wishes to assist the young couple and warns them of Fanny's father's intentions; Mill himself unexpectedly enters and Norton explains away the suspicious presence of a young man by introducing Edoardo as the new book-keeper. His mind now at rest, Mill entrusts his daughter with a letter that she is to present to the foreigner who is about to arrive. This is none other than Slook: as soon as he comes in, he clumsily tries to show off his newly acquired "European" good manners without, however, forgetting that he is basically a man accustomed to "practical American simplicity." When at last he is left alone with Fanny, Slook learns from the letter that she is the girl whom Mill has selected to be his future wife. Fanny tries to persuade Slook to give up any idea of getting his hands on his "merchandise," and then Edoardo comes in and intimates that the American had better abandon the business entirely and not say anything about it to old Mill: Slook, afraid of having his eyes torn out, goes off with the young people without being able to understand why they are so threatening. Clarina is worried about Fanny, whom she would like to see happy, and Norton comforts her, secure in his belief that the marriage to Slook will never take place. As soon as he has the chance, Norton insinuates to Slook that the goods in which he is about to invest (his future wife) are already "mortgaged." His head spinning with all this, poor Slook goes to look for Mill and tells him that the deal is off, but the outraged Mill at once challenges him to a duel, feeling himself to have been tricked and insulted. When Mill has gone away, Slook soon discovers that Edoardo and Fanny are in love and, moved by their words, proposes to sign the promissory note over to Edoardo whom, at the same time, he designates as his heir: the American cannot believe that in Europe a father would force a daughter into marrying against her will. Meanwhile Mill, preparing for the duel, realizes that he might get the worst of it and becomes terrified: when Slook joins him and observes his lack of courage he teases him until the others come in to break off the warlike preparations. Now Edoardo shows Mill the promissory note and demands the goods specified, but the astonished Mill will have none of it. Only Slook can persuade him to allow Fanny to marry Edoardo, promising him that he has nominated the young man his heir: now that the promissory note has been made out to Edoardo, it will bring happiness to all!

Based on Program Notes from The Rossini Festival-Pesaro, Italy
at the Heckscher Theater, New York City in 1947 by the Ballet Society. The Broadway production took place on May 1, 1947, at the Ethel Barrymore Theater. Menotti himself created the libretto.

"The Medium" is one of the most successful supernatural thrillers ever composed in the 20th century. Its melodrama works. Menotti himself wrote of it: "Despite its eerie setting and gruesome conclusions, 'The Medium' is actually a play of ideas. It describes the tragedy of a woman caught between two worlds, a world of reality which she cannot wholly comprehend, and a supernatural world in which she cannot believe." The opera played on Broadway and became a big hit and was the first American opera to be shown commercially in movie houses. Menotti himself recorded the genesis of his creative process:

"Although the opera was not composed until 1945, the idea of 'The Medium' first occurred to me in 1936 in the little Austrian town of St. Wolfgang near Salzburg. I had been invited by my neighbors to attend a séance in their house. I readily accepted their invitation but, I must confess, with my tongue in my cheek. However, as the séance unfolded, I began to be somewhat troubled. Although I was unaware of anything unusual, it gradually became clear to me that my hosts, in their pathetic desire to believe, actually saw and heard their dead daughter Doodly (a name, incidentally, which I have retained in the opera). It was I, not they, who felt cheated. The creative power of their faith and conviction made me examine my own cynicism and led me to wonder at the multiple texture of reality."

Act 1
The medium's parlor

Monica, Madame Flora's daughter, and Toby, a mute servant boy rescued from the streets of Budapest as a small child by Madame Flora, play dress-up as Monica makes up a romantic fairytale. When Madame Flora, or "Baba" as they call her, arrives home somewhat drunk, she violently chastises them for not preparing for that night's séance. Soon the guests arrive - Mr. and Mrs. Gobineau, regulars, and the widow Mrs. Nolan who is attending for the first time. With Madame Flora in a trance in her chair, a fake seance is held where Mrs. Nolan speaks with what she thinks is her deceased sixteen-year-old daughter Doodly (a name, incidentally, which I have retained in the opera). It was I, not they, who felt cheated. The creative power of their faith and conviction made me examine my own cynicism and led me to wonder at the multiple texture of reality.

"The Medium"
Commissioned by Columbia University, its first performance was there in 1946. The opera's first professional production was presented on a double bill with Menotti's "The Telephone" at the Heckscher Theater, New York City in 1947 by the Ballet Society. The Broadway production took place on May 1, 1947, at the Ethel Barrymore Theater. Menotti himself created the libretto.

Toby is presenting a puppet show for Monica, and as the scene unfolds, their heretofore fraternal love now begins to show signs of a new and unfamiliar romantic love. When Baba comes home, she resumes her accusations towards Toby, sure that he knows what went on the night of the fateful séance. The guests again arrive, expecting another séance but are driven away by Madame Flora, who tries to convince them that the whole thing was a sham by revealing all the tricks that she and Monica used. But the guests are not convinced and leave claiming that while she might have thought she was cheating them, she in fact was not. Once the guests are gone, she drives Toby out despite Monica's pleas on his behalf. With everyone gone, and Monica in her room, Baba pours herself another drink and questions her own sanity, becoming wild with drink and eventually passing out. Once she has fallen asleep, Toby sneaks back in and tries to get into Monica's room, but he finds it locked and eventually goes to the trunk to find his tambourine. While searching, he knocks the lid of the trunk down waking Baba. Toby quickly hides in the puppet theater. Baba tries to see where the noise came from and fetches a revolver from a nearby drawer. Hysterically, she shouts out: "Who is it? Speak or I'll shoot!" and the puppet theater curtain moves. Baba screams and fires at it several times. As Toby's bloody body collapses grasping the curtain, Baba says "I've killed the ghost! I've killed the ghost!" Monica, hearing the gunshots, enters, sees Toby's lifeless body and runs for help. Baba asks, in a hoarse whisper, "Was it you?"

Based on Henry W. Simon (100 Great Operas and Their Stories) and George Martin (The Companion to Twentieth Century Opera) and Wikipedia.

"La Cambiale di Matrimonio" - "The Marriage Contract"

"La cambiale di matrimonio," a comedic farce in two acts with a libretto by Gaetano Rossi, was first produced at the Teatro San Moisè, Venice, in 1810. Composed in a few days when he was 18 years old, "La cambiale" was Rossini's first professional opera. The overture, written when he was a student at the Liceo Musicale in Bologna, is an important part of the modern concert repertoire. As was to become typical of his later career, the duet "Dunque io son" was later reused in "The Barber of Seville."

One act
A room in Tobia Mill's house

Norton and Clarina, servants of Tobia Mill, a rich English merchant, are eagerly discussing the latest news about the future of their master's daughter, the lovely Fanny. The two gossipers have to break up their conference when old Mill comes into the room, intent upon studying (without being much enlightened) the map of the world: his preposterous notions of geography do not get him very far! Norton and Clarina come back with an important letter that has arrived from the New World; although reluctant to tear himself away from geography, Mill is overjoyed to recognize the handwriting of Slook, his colonial correspondent from "Canada in America." In his letter, the American announces his impending arrival in order to pick up the "merchandise" quoted in the agreement that he has signed with Mill: the