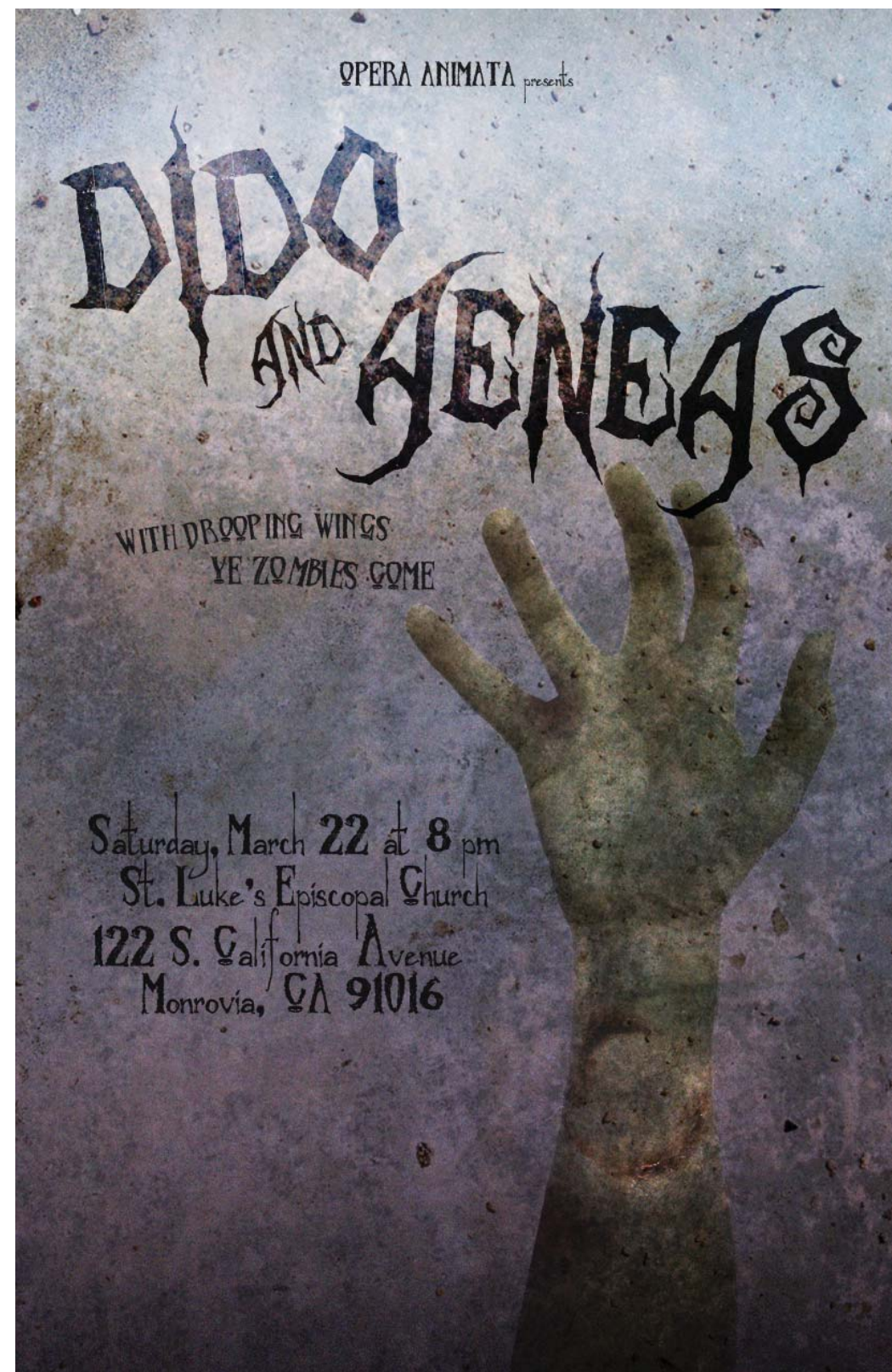


# ABOUT OPERA ANIMATA

Based in the greater Los Angeles area, Opera Animata strives to develop the relationship between the community and the arts. Opera Animata was conceived in the fall of 2013 by General Director Jenny Ohrstrom, and is committed to helping young singers, performers, directors, conductors, and composers by providing opportunities for their talents to emerge. The company is dedicated to helping these artists continue to work on their craft between finishing their academic studies and developing their careers.

**Our mission** is to serve the community by producing quality opera that embodies the spirit, culture, and creativity unique to Los Angeles while preserving and promoting the art form.



# SPECIAL THANKS

*Father Neil Tadken,  
Linda Taubenreuther, and the community  
at St. Luke's Episcopal Church*

*Jenny Ohrstrom and Joel Castro*

*Neil and Sarah Reynolds*

*Alyssa Brode and Steve Nolen*

*Jennifer White*

*Peter Sutheim*

*Ted Roze*

*Maurice Godin*

Please silence your cell phones  
and refrain from flash photography during the opera.

Join us after the performance for  
a reception in Guild Hall.



Born and raised in central California, **BRANDON ENCINAS (VIOLIN)** began playing the violin at age 10. In 2011 Brandon was the associate concertmaster for the Symphony Orchestra at University of Redlands where he studied music education. Brandon has performed with groups such as the Tulare County Symphony, Fresno Grand Opera, and the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra. He has played under professional conductors and composers including Dr. Bruce Kiesling, Inon Zur, Gary Schyman, and Austin Wintory. Brandon has performed in over 30 states as well as in Haiti, Colombia, and Portugal as a traveling violinist and music director with the Celebrant Singers. Brandon is a violin performance major at California State University, Northridge studying under Michael Ferril.



**MARY KEATING (VIOLIN)** completed her BM in Violin Performance from California State University, Northridge and has collaborated with such well known artists as JMSN, Whitton, Monique Benabou, and Kendrick Lamar (*Good Kid, M.A.A.D City*). Mary has performed with Shirley Jones and Cathy Rigby, in *Jekyll and Hyde* (featuring Constantine Maroulis and Deborah Cox) and for former president Jimmy Carster. Composers Mary has worked with include David Newman and John Williams. Her orchestral experience includes GSPO, San Bernardino Symphony, and Central Philharmonic and she has appeared at venues including House of Blues, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and Plummer Auditorium. Mary has studied with Michael Ferril and Arnold Belnick and in masterclasses with Martin Chalifour and Rebekka Hartmann. She resides in Tarzana and teaches at Claremont Community School of Music.



**BILLY TOBENKIN (CELLO)** earned a BA in English and Creative Writing from Cornell University. His interest in literature led him to classical music and eventually to the cello, which he began learning at age 25. He has played with the symphonies at CSUN and Santa Monica College; Orchestra Italiana del Cinema; the San Fernando Valley, West Coast and Topanga Symphonies; the Los Angeles Dream Orchestra at Walt Disney Concert Hall; and the Brentwood Westwood Symphony Orchestra, of

which he is the youngest member on the Board of Directors. In May 2013 Billy finished his BM in cello performance at CSUN summa cum laude, as well as his tenure as cellist in CSUN's Samuel Goldberg Honors String Quartet.

Opera Animata presents

# DIDO AND AENEAS

by Henry Purcell

Saturday, March 22, 2014 at 8 pm  
St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Monrovia CA

## CAST

Dido..... Trisha Rivera  
Aeneas..... Joel D. Castro  
Belinda .....Jenny Ohrstrom  
Second Woman .....Alyssa Brode  
Sorceress ..... Sarah Reynolds  
First Witch ..... Kari Burgess  
Second Witch .....Jennifer White  
First Sailor.....Steve Nolen

## INSTRUMENTALISTS

Keyboard.....MacKenzie Reed  
Violin ..... Mary Keating  
Violin ..... Shawn Cai  
Viola.....Brandon Encinas  
Cello..... Billy Tobenkin

## CREATIVE TEAM

Director .....Jenny Ohrstrom  
Stage Manager ..... LeVanna Atkinson-Williams



# SYNOPSIS

**Scene I:** The opera opens with Dido in her home with her attendants. Despite Belinda's efforts, Dido is full of sorrow, explaining that 'Peace and I are strangers grown.' Belinda believes the source of this grief to be the Trojan Aeneas, who visited only months earlier, and suggests that Carthage's troubles could be resolved by marriage. Dido's attendants attempt to raise Dido's spirits, followed by Aeneas's entrance to court. At first, Dido receives him coldly, but she eventually accepts his declaration of love and reunion.

**Scene II:** The Zombie Sorceress is plotting the destruction of Carthage and its queen, and calls in her minions to aid in her plot. She plans to send one of her most trusted aides, herself, as a Spirit disguised as the god Mercury, to tempt Aeneas to leave Dido and sail to Italy.

Dido and Aeneas, accompanied by their entourage, relax in a parlor in Dido's home. Suddenly, Dido hears distant thunder, prompting Belinda to tell the servants to prepare for a return to shelter as soon as possible. As everyone cleans up and hurries to go, Aeneas is stopped by the Spirit, who is disguised as Mercury. This pretend Mercury brings the command of Jove that Aeneas is to wait no longer in beginning his task of creating a new Troy on Latin soil. Aeneas consents to what he believes are the gods' wishes, but is heartbroken that he will have to leave Dido. Nonetheless, he prepares for his departure from Carthage.

**Scene III:** As Dido has gone to rest, the three companions keep celebrating the reunion of Dido and Aeneas. The sailor sings a drinking song, which is followed by the zombies' sudden appearance. The zombies are pleased at how well their plan has worked, and the Zombie Sorceress sings a solo describing her further plans for the destruction of Aeneas

is her first time performing with Opera Animata and she would like to thank Jenny for bringing zombie *Dido and Aeneas* to life!



**LEVANNA ATKINSON-WILLIAMS (STAGE MANAGER)** holds a BA in Creative Arts from Siena College, and when not providing managerial support, can be heard providing voiceover talent for animation, commercials, audiobooks, and podcasts. Favorite past stage roles include Ella Hammer and Clytemnestra. Thanks to Opera Animata for a wonderful opportunity to work alongside such a bold and talented cast!



**MACKENZIE REED (KEYBOARD)** is an accomplished Los Angeles-based multi-keyboardist and composer. She received her classical training from Ohio Wesleyan University (BM, 2007) and the California Institute of the Arts (MFA, 2012), as well as private study with world-renowned concert pianists, organists, and harpsichordists in Germany and the USA. She is known for her heavy metal-inspired compositions and is frequently sought after as a soloist and collaborator for theatrical productions. Her previous projects include *French Horn Recital: The Musical* (directed by Kristen Rea), *Lamentations* – a collection of readings and structured improvisations based on the lament, and *Dawn of the Hero* – a story about love during the zombie apocalypse accompanied by Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata. This is her first zombie opera and hopefully not the last.



After studying biology at University of California, Los Angeles, **SHAWN CAI (VIOLIN)** rekindled his interest in music, and is currently working on his BM in violin performance. He performed in various venues in his youth such as the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Kodak Theatre, and Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Currently, Shawn plays with various groups, including the American Youth Symphony, YMF Debut Orchestra, and Brentwood Westwood Symphony Orchestra.



**SARAH REYNOLDS (SORCERESS)** is a singer, voice teacher, and performing arts educator living in Los Angeles. She is a frequent soloist with the Colburn Community Chorale under the direction of Dr. Steven Kronauer, most recently performing Brahms' *Alto Rhapsodie*, Op. 53. Other recent credits include Long Beach Opera (the SoCal premiere of Adam's *Death of Klinghoffer*), Metropolitan Master Chorale (Mozart's *Requiem*), and Southern California Lyric Theater at the Hollywood Fringe Festival 2013 (*Aesopera*). In 2014 she will perform the roles of Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* with Opera Animata and Bradamante in Handel's *Alcina* with the Napa Music Festival. Sarah is a graduate of The New England Conservatory of Music, MM Vocal Performance, and The College of New Jersey, BM Vocal Performance. She currently serves as the Alto Soloist and Section Leader at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Monrovia. For more information, please visit [www.sarahreynolds.net](http://www.sarahreynolds.net).



**TRISHA RIVERA (DIDO)** is a mezzo-soprano based out of Long Beach, California. Her roles include Prince Charmant in *Cendrillon*, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, Third Knitter in *A Game of Chance*, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*, and Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Trisha recently returned from studying in Austria through the American Institute of Musical Studies, where she performed at the Schlossberg Kasematten. As a member of the Northridge Singers choir, Trisha sang at the opening of Kodak Hall, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Disney Hall, and at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in Wales where they won "Choir of the World" honors. She is a recipient of the Arts Council Scholarship as well as Opera Student of the Year from California State University Northridge where she earned her Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance.



**JENNIFER WHITE (SECOND WITCH)** is originally from Texas and has been living in Los Angeles for the past 9 years. She received her bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance from Southwestern University and sings with the Colburn Chorale at the Colburn School in downtown LA. Previous roles include Dorabella in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and the Mother in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. She currently studies with Sarah Reynolds and would like to thank her for being an amazing teacher. This

"on the ocean." The zombies quickly disperse and wait for their next attack.

**Scene IV:** Dido and Belinda enter, shocked at Aeneas's disappearance. Dido is distraught and Belinda comforts her. Suddenly Aeneas returns, but Dido is immediately suspicious of his true intentions, and his words do not pacify her. She derides his reasons for leaving, and even when Aeneas says he will defy the gods and stay in Carthage, Dido rejects him for having thought of leaving. After Dido forces Aeneas to leave, Dido faces the reality of her situation.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When I came across the idea of putting together a zombie opera, it did not take much time to pair the concept with Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. I wanted to experience the zombie apocalypse as it was happening, using a different concept for the undead. What if the undead could still think and plot? Even worse—what if they could unify under a zombie leader with a horrid agenda? What goal could those zombies possibly be working toward?

*Dido and Aeneas* is built and staged from the zombies' perspective. Once living and breathing themselves, zombies long to return to those lives they once had. Since they cannot come back to normal life, the only solution is to take it from all who still have it. Under their sorceress's leadership, they plot to take away that which they most desire: life.

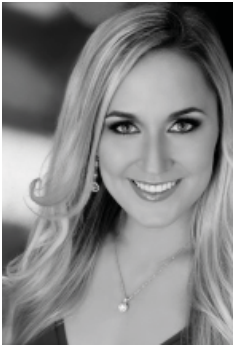
Jenny Ohrstrom



## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



**ALYSSA BRODE (SECOND WOMAN, BELINDA COVER)** is a Philadelphia-born soprano whose performance experience spans both coasts. Her recent opera credits include the Fairy Godmother (Massenet's *Cendrillon*), Laetitia (*The Old Maid and the Thief*) and the Foreign Woman (*The Consul*). As a member of the renowned Westminster Symphonic Choir, Alyssa had the privilege of performing symphonic masterworks with some of the world's preeminent conductors (Pierre Boulez, Kurt Masur, Lorin Maazel) and orchestras (New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Staatskapelle Berlin). Alyssa holds voice performance degrees from Westminster Choir College and California State University, Northridge and is a recipient of the Robert Barbera Scholarship in Voice and the Rachel Ketchie Memorial Award as well as being a recent inductee into the Pi Kappa Lambda music honor society.



Los Angeles soprano **KARIBURGESS (FIRST WITCH)** has recently performed the roles of Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus* and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*. She appeared as a soloist in *The Creation* by Haydn and in Beethoven's *Fantasia* with the Oregon Symphony. Ms. Burgess has trained in Europe at The American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria, and Opera Viva! in Verona, Italy. She has been the recipient of many honors and scholarships, and is nearing the completion of her Master of Music degree at California State University, Northridge under the tutelage of Dr. David Sannerud.



**JOEL D. CASTRO (AENEAS)** is a baritone born and raised in Los Angeles, California. He received his BA in Theatre, Classics, and Music from Santa Clara University, and just recently received his MM in Vocal Performance from California State University, Northridge (CSUN). Some of his prominent roles include Bob in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Le Roi in *Cendrillon* and Jud Fry in *Oklahoma!* Last summer he had the privilege to perform with the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) Festival Orchestra in Graz, Austria. Awards include Village Voices Scholarship from the Village Voices Chorale, Richard Owens Founder's Scholarship from AIMS, Vocal Arts Graduating Graduate Award from CSUN, and

a Geoffrey Award for Best Supporting Actor from the Morgan-Wixson Theatre for Jud Fry in *Oklahoma!* This coming June, Joel will be playing Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with LA Metropolitan Opera. He is excited to be playing Aeneas with the wonderfully talented people of Opera Animata.



**STEVE NOLEN (FIRST SAILOR)**, tenor, earned his Bachelor of Arts in Music from Westminster Choir College where he studied voice with Thomas Faracco. While there, he served as a member of the Westminster Symphonic Choir and the selective Williamson Voices ensemble, performing works including Mahler's Second Symphony, Mozart's *Requiem*, and Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with such conductors as Michael Tilson Thomas and Sir Roger Norrington. As a graduate student at Penn State University, Steve appeared with the Chamber Singers in Verdi's *Requiem* and as a part of the Musica Menotti Opera Festival in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. In addition to his musical training, Steve is certified as a RHCSA/RCHE and holds an advanced degree in Information Security with a focus in Information Assurance and Decision Support.



**JENNY OHRSTROM (FOUNDER/GENERAL DIRECTOR OF OPERA ANIMATA; BELINDA, DIDO COVER)** has been seen in Los Angeles as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, as Miss Pinkerton in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and as a soprano soloist for Carmina Burana. Previous roles include Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus*, Laurie Moss in *The Tender Land*, and Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas*. Jenny has also been seen on stage for concert performances of arias from *Il trovatore*, *Carmen*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Rusalka*. Her 2014 season brings performances as Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, and the title role in Handel's *Alcina*. Jenny is a winner of CSUN's and CWU's Concerto Competitions, and a recipient of the Village Voices Chorale Scholarship, Nancy Hooker Scholarship, NATS-LA Summer Study Grant, and the CSUN Graduate Fellowship for Outstanding Research and Creative Activity. She holds a Master of Music in Voice Performance from California State University, Northridge and a Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Washington. Jenny is an alumna of the programs Classical Singing in New York, LidalNorth in Oslo, Norway, and most recently, the Opera Studio of the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. She will spend her coming summer as an artist with the NAPA Music Festival in Napa, California. Visit [www.jmohrstrom.com](http://www.jmohrstrom.com).