

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.

**Be sure to catch the
rest of our 2014-2015 season!**

March 20 & 21, 2015
Orfeo ed Euridice
St. Luke's Episcopal Church

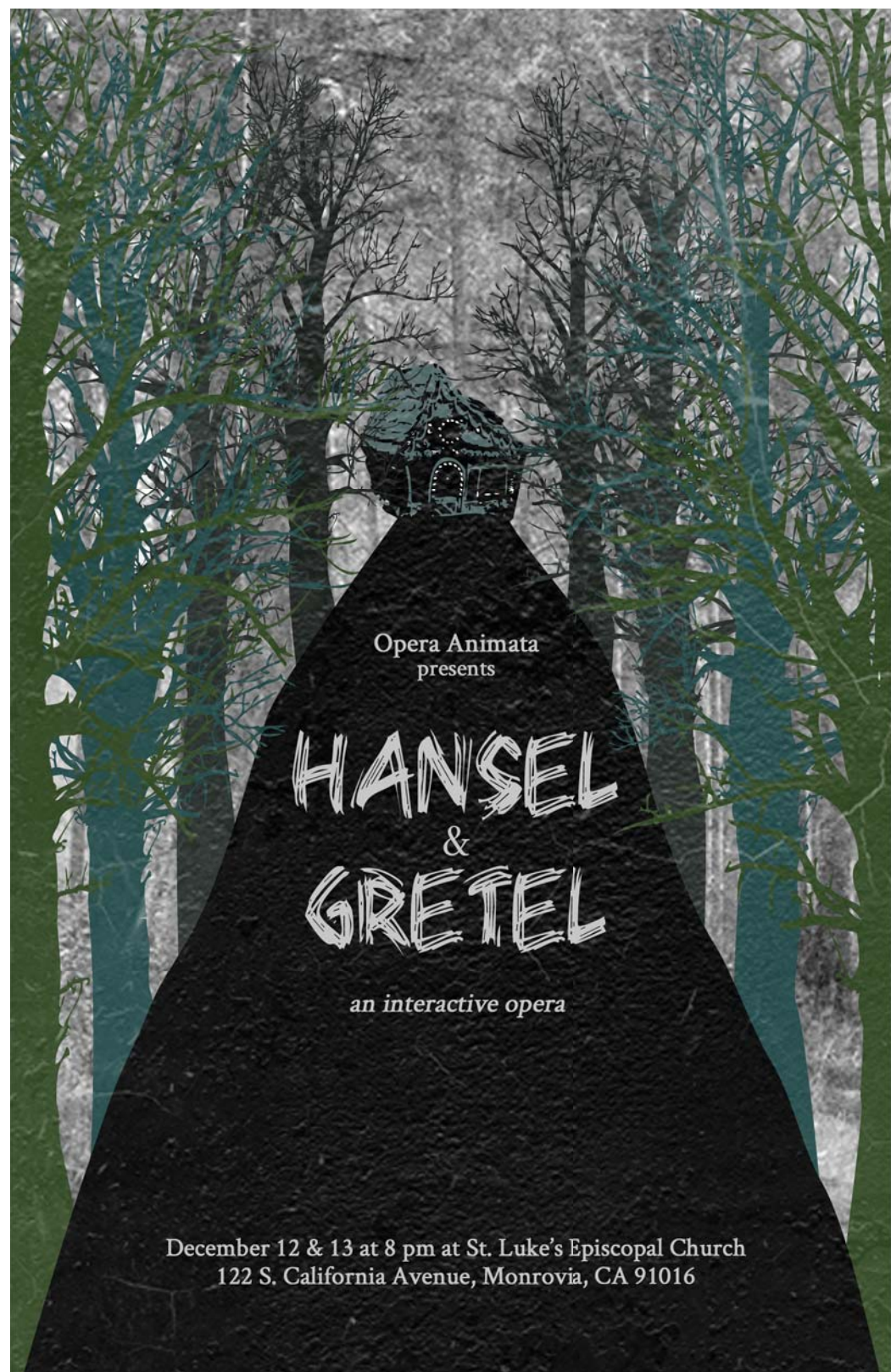
March 2015
Animata in Taberna
Location TBA

June 2015
Dido and Aeneas
Hollywood Fringe Festival

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www.operaanimata.com

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Rev. Neil Tadken

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Linda Taubenreuther

Ellen Ohrstrom

Steve Nolen

Vanessa Martinez

Ted Roze

Stephanie Castro

Maurice Godin

Notice

Hansel and Gretel will be presented in English with no intermission (approximate run time 90 minutes).

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

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Approaching a familiar tale like Hansel and Gretel, I looked for ways to modernize it while keeping the element of magic in the children's journey through the forest. I decided to incorporate a homeless motif for Hansel and Gretel's everyday life in order to ground the story in a dark reality and allow the magic world to stand out from the real one.

A major part of the Hansel and Gretel story is the concept of the children having only each other, in their home lives and especially in the woods. The children are also very clever (clever enough to foil a being with supernatural powers), which they learned from having to fend for themselves. It isn't until Hansel and Gretel enter the forest that we see the children become vulnerable and magic take over. In this vulnerable state, I believe Hansel and Gretel fabricate magical characters like the Witch. Ultimately, Hansel and Gretel survive their encounter with the Witch because of their love and trust in each other.

When we experience theatre we find ourselves caught in the fervor of seeing a live production, and we suspend disbelief and allow ourselves to be vulnerable. Magic is created in front of us, and we don't distinguish between real and imaginary; we only register it as magic. Tonight we want you to experience this world just as Hansel and Gretel do. If you leave tonight believing in the magic in the woods, we will have done our jobs.

Have fun!

- Joe

Opera Animata presents

Engelbert Humperdinck's

HANSEL AND GRETEL

an interactive opera

Act I

In an alley, where the family of a broom maker has been living.

Hansel and Gretel's family is homeless and poor but content. The children play and dance instead of finishing their chores, so Mother furiously sends them into the woods to pick strawberries. When Father returns and discovers that his children are alone in the woods, he warns Mother of the evil Witch who lives there and worries that the children are in danger. They quickly leave to search for their children.

Act II

In the enchanted forest.

The children wander happily through the forest, playing games and eating strawberries, but soon the strawberries are gone as night approaches. Hansel admits that he has lost the way home, and the children grow frightened. The Sandman comes to bring them sleep, and the children say their evening prayer before peacefully dozing off in the forest.

Act III

The Witch's gingerbread house.

The Dew Fairy awakens the children, and they see a magnificent gingerbread house standing before them. As they enter and nibble on the delectable sweets, the Witch appears and puts a spell on them. She intends to use her magical oven to turn the children into gingerbread so that she may eat them, but the clever children have a plan. Gretel breaks the spell and tricks the Witch into peering into the oven, then pushes her inside the oven and shuts the door. The Witch's death sets Hansel free and brings the other enchanted gingerbread children back to life. Mother and Father happily reunite with their lost children, and everyone celebrates together.

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Hansel

Trisha Rivera

Gretel

Alyssa Brode*, Nan Cui†

Mother

Jenny Ohrstrom

Father

Joel D. Castro

Witch

Sarah Reynolds

Sandman

Meleeah Abkarian†, Alexandra Sanfilippo*

Dew Fairy

Meleeah Abkarian*, Alexandra Sanfilippo†

Gingerbread Children

Tiffany Argumedo, Kayla Bailey,
Alyssa Brode†, Nan Cui*

Director

Joe McCormack Estrella

Piano

Sosi Chifchiyan

Stage Manager

LeVanna Atkinson-Williams

Costume Design

Joel Castro

Graphic Design

Alyssa Brode

Death of Klinghoffer. Sarah was recently named a “Recommended Artist” by the 2014 Beverly Hills Auditions council. This spring, she will be singing the role of Orfeo in Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* with Opera Animata. Sarah is a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music, MM Vocal Performance, and the College of New Jersey, BM Vocal Performance. For more information, please visit www.sarahreynolds.net.



Trisha Rivera (Hansel) 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.



Alexandra Sanfilippo (Sandman 12/13, Dew Fairy 12/12) is a soprano from Los Angeles, California. Her former opera credits include Drusilla in Monteverdi’s *L’incornazione di Poppea*, a spirit in Massenet’s *Cendrillon*, and Augusta’s friend Mary in Douglas Moore’s *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. For three years in a row, Alexandra was featured as a guest artist, performing opera arias and duets at the “Taste of Italy” fundraiser for the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles and has also had the privilege of performing in the Valley Performing Arts Center for its opening gala in the spring of 2011. Alexandra is a recipient of the Milt Young Music Scholarship, Helen Conner Nern Vocal Scholarship, and the Robert Pike Whitten Arts Scholarship. She holds both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in music from California State University, Northridge. Visit AlexandraSanfilippo.com for more information.

† Friday, December 12

* Saturday, December 13



Joe McCormack Estrella (Director) is an LA-based director who has been active in the world of theater for eighteen years now and doesn't seem to be stopping any time soon. He recently began his own company, Chairness Productions, and is looking forward to cultivating that into something bigger. He began directing while he was working on obtaining his B.A. in English from California State University, Northridge. He also holds an award in stage management given

by The Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival as well as nominations in acting and directing from the same program. Joe is excited to be working with Opera Animata and to further bring great theater to Los Angeles.

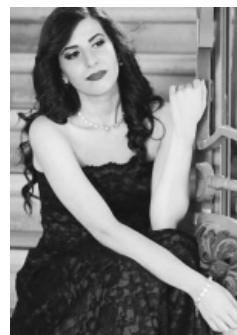


Jenny Ohrstrom (Mother; Founder/General Director of Opera Animata) has been seen in Los Angeles as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, as Miss Pinkerton in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and as a soprano soloist for *Carmina Burana*. Previous roles include Rosalinda in *Die Fledermaus*, Laurie Moss in *The Tender Land*, and Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas* as well as concert performances of arias from *Il trovatore*, *Carmen*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Rusalka*. 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, the Opera Studio of the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria, and the new NAPA Music Festival in Napa, California. For more information, visit jmohrstrom.com.



Sarah Reynolds (Witch) is a singer, voice teacher and performing arts educator living in Los Angeles. She is a frequent concert soloist, most recently performing in Tarik O'Regan's *Triptych* and Brahms' *Rhapsodie*, Op. 53. Other recent credits include the role of Bradamante in Handel's *Alcina* at the Napa Music Festival, the roles of the Sorceress and Spirit in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* with Opera Animata, and Long Beach Opera Chorus in the SoCal premiere of Adams'



Meleeah Abkarian (Sandman 12/12, Dew Fairy 12/13) is a Los Angeles-born Armenian soprano. She began training operatically at the Pasadena Conservatory of Music, and later went on to California State University, Northridge where she graduated with the Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance. Meleeah's performance experience has spanned internationally with the FAVA Opera Program in France where she took part in recitals of *Mélodies Françaises*, *Arié Antiques*, *Mélodies d'Isabelle Aboulker*, as well as

the role of Ninetta in a production of Offenbach's *La Périchole*. She has most recently been seen in Los Angeles as Drusilla in a production of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. Meleeah's inclusion of her culture's repertoire has gained her recognition by the Armenian Chronicles where writer Lara Injeyan expresses that "the clear yet ever present voice of the young Meleeah Abkarian reminds [her] of what an amazing thing it is to be moved by music."



Tiffany Argumedo (Gingerbread Child) is a classically trained contralto and received her master's degree in vocal performance from California State University, Northridge. She has been praised on her comedic timing and character work and is credited with roles in such operas as *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, *Cendrillon*, and *The Old Maid and the Thief*. Tiffany's dark lower range has lent itself perfectly to perform in oratorio work as an alto soloist. Some of the works include Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, Handel's *Messiah*, and

Mendelssohn's *Elijah*. Her most recent project is a collaboration with clarinetist Timothy Skinner where they performed a seldom-heard chamber work by Judith Zaimont for voice, clarinet, and piano at the University of Texas at Austin. Currently she is an active member of the award-winning choir, the Sunday Night Singers, under the direction of Mike McCullough.



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!



Kayla Bailey (Gingerbread Child) is thrilled to be making her Opera Animata debut! Kayla received her Bachelor of Arts in Music from California Lutheran University and her master's degree in Vocal Arts at California State University, Northridge. Opera/theatre credits include: *Into the Woods* (Rapunzel), *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre* (Thaisa), *Signor Deluso* (Celie), *Cendrillon* (Noémie), *Die Fledermaus* (Adele). This past summer, Kayla performed internationally, entertaining thousands

of guests on the high seas for Silversea Cruises in the Mediterranean. In addition to performing, Kayla serves as rehearsal assistant for Los Robles Children's Choir, music specialist for Los Cerritos Middle School, and teaches private voice lessons from her home in Moorpark. Love and gratitude to my family and friends for their never-ending support!



Alyssa Brode (Gretel 12/13, Gingerbread Child 12/12) is a Philadelphia-born soprano whose performance experience spans both coasts. Her recent opera credits include *La Fée* (Massenet's *Cendrillon*), *Laetitia* (*The Old Maid and the Thief*), the Foreign Woman (*The Consul*) and Second Woman in Opera Animata's inaugural production of *Dido and Aeneas*. 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 member of the Pi Kappa Lambda music honor society and a recipient of the Robert Barbera Scholarship in Voice, the Village Voices Scholarship and the Rachel Ketchie Memorial Award. Visit alysabrode.com for more information.



Joel D. Castro (Father) is a baritone born and raised in Los Angeles, California. He received his BA in Theatre, Classics, and Music from Santa Clara University and his MM in Vocal Performance from California State University, Northridge (CSUN). Some of his prominent roles include Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas*, Bob in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Le Roi in

Cendrillon and Jud Fry in *Oklahoma!* He has performed in Austria for the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) Festival Orchestra in Graz. 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!* He has performed with Los Angeles Metropolitan Opera, Celestial Opera and City of Angels Community Choir. When not singing, Joel can be found practicing stage combat and medieval martial arts.



Sosi Chifchiyan (Piano) is one of the leading piano accompanists in her native country of Bulgaria. She has more than twenty years of experience as a chief pianist and opera coach at Bulgaria's prominent Plovdiv State Opera House. She also worked as a piano accompanist in vocal classes at the Academy of Music, Dance, and Fine Arts and the National School of Music in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. In the USA, Sosi Chifchiyan collaborates with Center Stage Opera, Orange County High School of the Arts, and California

State University, San Bernardino. As a performer, Sosi plays concerts, international competitions, workshops, and concert tours in most countries throughout Europe. Her vast vocal and instrumental repertoire includes 40+ complete operas and collaborations with many renowned performers; among them are opera singers Krassimira Stoyanova-Kammersängerin and Kaludi Kaludov, conductors Borislav Ivanov, Milen Natchev and Georgi Dimitrov, and stage directors Plamen Kartalov and Pavel Gerdzhikov.



Lyric soprano **Nan Cui (Gretel 12/12, Gingerbread Child 12/13)** graduated from California State University, Northridge where she sang the title role in *Cendrillon* and Clara in *Signor Deluso*. Other roles include First Lady (*The Magic Flute*), Musetta (*La bohème*), Yum-Yum (*The Mikado*) and Poppea (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*). Nan was awarded the Nora Sand Memorial Scholarship to attend the American Institute of Musical Studies in 2013, where she was a semi-finalist in the Meistersinger competition. Nan

also participated as an emerging artist in the OperaWorks summer program in 2012.