

Opera Southwest Conductor Finds a Neglected Gem

BY STEPHANIE HAINSFURTHER



Anthony Barrese

A “lost” opera that has not been heard in its entirety since 1871 will be performed in Albuquerque this fall. What’s more, the music director of the company performing the opera is the composer who resurrected it.

Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Anthony Barrese of Opera Southwest spent 10 years researching and reconstructing the score and

libretto of “Hamlet (Amleto)” by Franco Faccio. The opera has not been performed since 1871.

A Shakespeare buff, Barrese often wondered why there was no famous operatic “Hamlet.”

“There is ‘Romeo & Juliet,’ ‘Otello,’ ‘Macbeth,’ even ‘Falstaff,’ which is a horrible play,” he said in an interview. “Then I read this blurb somewhere about Arrigo Boito, the librettist for Verdi’s ‘Otello’ and ‘Falstaff,’ and it said he wrote a libretto for ‘Hamlet’ for his good friend Franco Faccio.”

Barrese got in touch with Casa Ricordi, a music publisher founded in 1808, in Milan. They had good news and bad news for him.

“They said, ‘The good news is we have the original

manuscript. The bad news is we’re moving to a new library right now. But we can give it to you on microfilm,’” Barrese recalled.

Eventually, Barrese spent a summer in Milan with the original score and a magnifying glass. It took him one week to decipher one page; there are 600 pages in the manuscript.

“I’m in a small room with no air conditioning, in August in Milan, with a little fan blowing hot air,” he said. “I have latex gloves on. There are these little old Italian ladies staring me down, making sure I don’t sweat on the manuscript.”

Even though Faccio stopped composing after the last disastrous performance of “Amleto” (the tenor was ill), he was a famous conductor of the day. Audiences will be familiar with the music, written during the Golden Age of Italian opera, Barrese said.

“This is a contemporary of Verdi, so even though they [Faccio and Boito] were trying to be new and avant garde, it still sounds like Italian opera of the 19th century.”

In 2004, Barrese organized a read-through of the score for Placido Domingo, who recently wrote to Opera Southwest, “I had the pleasure to attend a presentation of this work by the talented young conductor Anthony Barrese, and I remember well the strong impression made by both the quality of the music and the performance.”

Barrese credits Boito with a libretto that is true

to Shakespeare’s play. “All of the famous lines are there – ‘To be or not to be,’ ‘Get thee to a nunnery,’ ‘To thine own self be true.’ And the audience will recognize all of the famous scenes and situations.”

In other words, everybody dies.

Opera Southwest is calling “Hamlet (Amleto)” the “New World premiere.” Hamlet will be sung by tenor Alex Richardson; soprano Abla Lynn Hamza sings Ofelia. Barrese will conduct. Stage director is David Bartholomew, and set designer is Carey Wong, who designed the sets for Opera Southwest’s recent productions of “Madama Butterfly” and “Otello.” The opera will be sung in Italian with English supertitles.

Stephanie Hainsfurther is associate editor for ABQ Free Press. Reach her at Stephanie@freeabq.com.

Opera Southwest presents The New World Premiere of:

Franco Faccio’s “Hamlet (Amleto)” Rediscovered and restored by OSW Artistic Director Anthony Barrese

Save the Dates: October 26 (2 pm)-October 31 (7:30 pm)-November 2 (2 pm)

National Hispanic Cultural Center, 1701 4th St SW

Season tickets on sale now at (505) 243-0591 (for “Hamlet” and for “La Boheme” in spring 2015). Single tickets are on sale starting June 1 at operasouthwest.org or (505) 243-0591 and at the National Hispanic Cultural Center Box Office (505) 724-4771.

Experimental Dance Works Fuse Art and Science With Movement

BY CHRISTINE VIGIL

Albuquerque-based collaborators Esteban Garza and Jacqueline De Lora are experimenting with art that is aesthetically and emotionally provoking, and also teaches.

Through their dance project, “/siNGk/skape,” the two are creating a dialogue in which art and science are the primary languages, with dance as the vehicle for expression.

Artistic Director and Producer Garza unites his vision of creating a dance concert that contains elements of concrete existence with an abstract aesthetic. De Lora, a cancer researcher and the project’s scientific adviser, informs Garza’s work in contemplating the unique relationship between the way the human body moves and our natural physical chemistry.

As a result of his particular passion for choreography, Esteban is working toward creating art that embodies his vision for work that is subjective and addresses a broad range of practical topics. Thus “/siNGk/skape” aims to investigate the physical world using human form, dynamism and rhythmic forces.

Friday, May 23, 7 pm
Saturday, May 24, 2 pm & 7:30 pm

/siNGk/skape

VSA/N4th Theater
4904 4th St NW, 344-4542,
\$15-18, vsartsnm.org



Photo by Fatima Shami.

The project leads the dancers through an innovative method of kinesthetic motion directed by the choreography and soundtrack, inspired by the stunning movement found in nature and aided by discussion of scientific theories and observations. The work leads

curiosity on a journey into the physical world and seeks the correlation between art and science.

“Art is a medium to communicate complex ideas about science to the public,” De Lora said.

Set to an eclectic original musical score composed by Alexis Garza, Esteban’s brother, the evening will feature a cast of dancers from a wide range of backgrounds, collaborating to create a visually energizing landscape that lures the observer’s imagination into the dream of embodying the extravagant physical freedom of nature.

Through a series of dance shorts—seven in all—“/siNGk/skape” also will feature work from guest choreographer Blythe Eden. Dance solos, duos, trios, quartets and large group pieces characterize the production, carrying a dynamic sense of physicality and fluid transition. These pieces will urge the audience to contemplate the narrative that takes the theoretical and ephemeral state of dance and fuses it with the practical nature of science.

Christine Vigil writes about dance for ABQ Free Press.