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## American One Acts

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CENTER FOR  
PERFORMING ARTS  
Governors State University

OPERA UP CLOSE  
*presents*

# AMERICAN ONE ACTS

Directed by John Concepcion  
Musical Direction by  
Marta Johnson Lettofsky

Featuring:

**Desiree Hassler, soprano**  
**Pamela Williams, mezzo soprano**  
**Susan Nelson, soprano**  
**Michael Cavalieri, baritone**  
**Thomas Potter, tenor**  
**Kirk Greiner, baritone**

**Marta Johnson Lettofsky, Piano**  
**Frank Babbitt, Violin & Viola**  
**David Orlicz, Clarinet & Flute**

**Sunday, March 30, 2014 - 4:00 p.m.**

The Opera Up Close series is sponsored by



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## The Telephone (By Giancarlo Menotti)

Lucy, prone to gossip and a gift for gab. Her phone seems to be surgically implanted onto her hand. Sung by soprano, Desiree Hassler. Desiree was last seen at GSU in *The Three Divas* concert last season.

Ben, the hapless boyfriend looking for an opportunity to pop the question, but thwarted each time. Sung by baritone, Michael Cavalieri. Mike has appeared at GSU many times, including *The Elixir of Love*, *The Voice: A Celebration of Song* and *Lyric Opera Preview*.

## A Hand of Bridge (by Samuel Barber)

David, hates his job, hates his boss, daydreams of being the “Sultan of America” and showered in riches. Sung by baritone, Michael Cavalieri.

Geraldine, David’s long-suffering wife who feels unloved, isolated, forgotten (“Only my mother could have loved me had I but let her”). Sung by soprano, Susan Nelson. This is Susan’s first appearance at GSU.

Bill, the philandering lawyer in love with Cymbaline (whom we never meet). Usually pining for her in a fantasy dream (“If only you were my wife, playing cards with me every night”). Sung by tenor, Thomas Potter. This is Thomas’ first time performing at GSU.

Sally, Tom’s daffy wife, who seems to be fixated on buying a certain hat of peacock feathers and can think of little else. Sung by mezzo soprano, Pamela Williams. Pamela was last heard at GSU in *The Three Divas* concert last season.

## The Old Maid and the Thief (By Giancarlo Menotti)

Miss Todd, a lonely spinster who finds her life turned upside down when an unexpected stranger enters her life. Sung by mezzo soprano, Pamela Williams.

Miss Pinkerton, her nosy neighbor. She senses something is “up” but can’t quite figure it out. Suspicious, intrusive and annoyingly tenacious. Sung by soprano, Desiree Hassler.

Laetitia, Miss Todd’s young man-hungry housemaid. She longs for adventure, a strong handsome husband and a chance to escape the boredom of life with Miss Todd. Sung by soprano, Susan Nelson.

Bob, the mysterious wanderer who appears on the doorstep and turns life upside down for the ladies. Sung by baritone, Kirk Greiner. This is Kirk’s first appearance at GSU.

**Desirée Hassler, soprano**, has been described as possessing an “angelic voice combining a shimmering brilliance with lyric warmth.” In addition to singing in the full-time chorus at Lyric Opera of Chicago, the soprano has sung and covered roles at Lyric in *Oklahoma!*, *Manon*, *Macbeth*, *Boris Godunov*, *Show Boat* and *Elektra*. Recent performances include Bach’s *B Minor* mass with Chicago Bach Project (John Nelson, conductor), *Violetta* in Verdi’s *La traviata* with the Lake Geneva Symphony Orchestra, Ellen in *Oklahoma!* at *Lyric Opera of Chicago*, Kondja in *The Rose of Stambul* with Chicago Folks Operetta, soprano soloist in the Brahms *Requiem* (Los Angeles, CA), Barber’s *Knoxville, Summer of 1915* with the Prairie Ensemble, Vaughan Williams’ *Sea Symphony*, as well as Haydn’s *Lord Nelson Mass* with the Wichita Symphony. A California native, Desirée has successfully competed from the regional to International levels at the Bel Canto Competition, Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, International Franz Liszt Competition and is the recipient of many distinguished awards. The soprano enjoys performing music from the Renaissance to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in recital, concert and opera mediums. Hassler graduated in 2011 with a doctorate in Vocal Performance and Literature from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she completed a master’s degree in 2003. Dr. Hassler teaches voice lessons, vocal literature, and addiction courses at Chicago’s Moody Bible Institute. When she’s not doing lip trills or drinking coffee, Desirée is likely gardening or riding bikes with her super-husband Dan and four fabulous children in Oak Park, IL.

**Pamela Williams, mezzo-soprano**, is thrilled to be back to the Opera Up Close series at GSU as Sally and Miss Todd! Pamela enjoys singing in recitals and with orchestra in Chicago and across the United States. She will be performing as alto soloist in Handel’s *Messiah* this spring with the Armstrong University Orchestra and Choral Union. Pamela loves her job of being a full-time member of the chorus at Lyric where she will be in the ensemble of *Sound of Music* this May and has performed and understudied roles in *Oklahoma!*, *Parsifal*, *Elektra*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Show Boat*, *Lohengrin*, *Katya Kabanova*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Turandot*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Manon Lescaut*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Other performances include singing as alto soloist with the Choral Union at University of Missouri-Columbia’s performance of *Lord Nelson Mass* with Joseph Flummerfelt conducting. She has also been a featured alto soloist of Mendelssohn’s *Elijah*, Mozart’s *Requiem*, Karl Jenkins’ *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace*, Verdi’s *Requiem*, Handel’s *Messiah*, Durufle’s *Requiem* and Beethoven’s 9th Symphony. “When I’m not singing, you can find me enjoying time with friends, drinking coffee, baking, and working on quilting projects! Special thanks to John Concepcion for inviting me back to be part of this series!”

**Baritone Michael Cavalieri** has sung a wide range of styles and repertoire, spanning from opera to concert to ensemble. Recently, he appeared as Captain Corcoran in Light Opera Works’ “HMS Pinafore”, which concluded a busy spring as Escamillo (Carmen) with the West Suburban Symphony Orchestra and Germont (La Traviata) with the Lake Geneva Symphony Orchestra. Other roles include Guglielmo (Cosi fan Tutte), Belcore (L’elisir d’amore), Valentin (Faust), and Carl Magnus (A Little Night Music). Mr.

Cavalieri performs with many regional organizations and was last seen on the Symphony Center Orchestra Hall stage with Sir Marc Elder and the Chicago Civic Orchestra singing Mahler's "Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen" and made his Chicago Chorale debut in Grieg's "Four Hymns" in 2011. His recital repertoire includes Schubert, Wolf, Duparc, and Argento, performing "The Andrée Expedition" with J.J. Penna. Michael contributed over a dozen songs to the complete songbook of Charles Ives for Naxos Records and recently received 2nd place nationally in the art song division of The American Prize in Voice.

Mr. Cavalieri began his studies with Dr. Sam Scifres at Illinois Wesleyan University (B.M.) before continue his Master's studies at Arizona State University with David Britton. After a summer as a member of the Sante Fe Opera Apprentice program, his academic work concluded with Mr. Richard Cross at Yale University where he performed such roles as Count Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) and the title role in Gianni Schicchi. No stranger to musicals or contemporary music, Michael sang the role of Panlgooss for the Milanese debut of Bernstein's "Candide" with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano and in collaboration with RealTime Opera and SO Percussion, debuted the title role in "Feynman", a one-act mixed media opera for percussion and baritone. Mr. Cavalieri premiered the role of "The Announcer" in Gustavo Leone's "The Leader" at the Goodman Theater. A versatile voice for the concert hall, his work includes Handel's Messiah, Mozart's Mass in C Major, and Orff's Carmina Burana.

Locally, the Chicago Sun-Times called his voice "rich and juicy" and Chicago Classical Review proclaimed his "rounded tone and poised, flexible expression could not have been more communicative" (Grieg's Four Hymns) and "not only a fine comic actor, but who sang with a baritone that sounded quite luxurious for a role that more often emphasizes comedy over vocalism" (Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore.) He sings regularly with the Chicago Symphony Chorus and can often be found with the Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorus and the Grant Park Music Festival. He also collaborates often with the Governor State University "Opera, Up Close" series.

**Lyric soprano Susan Nelson** has been praised by critics for her "full, powerful voice – agile and pliant" as well as her interpretations, called both "sensitive and moving" and "full of life and vigor." She showcases versatility and vocal beauty in repertoire from Bach and Mozart to verismo and contemporary opera. She has been seen on the stages of Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Delaware, Sarasota Opera, Kentucky Opera, Opera Illinois, and The Savoyaires, and has performed as a soloist with Music of the Baroque, Access Contemporary Music, Elmhurst Choral Union, and Illinois Valley Symphony Orchestra. In December 2014, she will return to the South Bend Symphony Orchestra for their Holiday Pops Concerts.

**Thomas L. Potter, tenor**, just completed his 21st season as a full time member of the Lyric Opera of Chicago chorus. During his time at Lyric, he has performed the role of Arthur Jones in *Billy Budd*, one of the three tenors in *Sweeney Todd* and as the Square Dance Caller in *Susannah*. Potter has appeared as soloist with the CSO in a pops concert under batons of Margaret Hillis and Michael Morgan. He has also sung roles with Chicago Chamber Opera and Chicago Opera Theater.

**Baritone Kirk Greiner** attended the University of Iowa where he earned a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Voice Performance. He continued his studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music and Case Western University. His favorite roles include Nick Shadow (*The Rake's Progress*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), Count di Luna (*Il Trovatore*), Noah, Marcello (*La Bohème*), and Count Almaviva (*The Marriage of Figaro*).

Kirk has participated in many apprentice artist programs, including Cleveland, Des Moines and the Berkshires. A member of the chorus at Lyric Opera Chicago since 1997, he has appeared in over 60 productions. In addition, he has appeared with Chicago Opera Theater's student matinee performances of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

Kirk was married in 2001 and has two young boys. This is his first appearance at Governors State University.

**Lyric Tenor John Concepcion**, recent recipient of The American Prize in Vocal Performance in Opera, 2011 (second place), and a finalist in the Bel Canto Regional Voice Competition, is in constant demand as a performer, teacher and musical artist. He maintains a busy performance schedule on both the concert and operatic stages. Most notably, John has appeared with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Grant Park Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, Minnesota Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony, Hawaii Symphony, Tulsa Opera, Cleveland Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Portland Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, and the Pine Mountain Music Festival.

Recent appearances include West Suburban Symphony (*Verdi's Requiem* and Don Jose in Bizet's *Carmen*), *Soli Deo Gloria* (Bach's *St. John Passion*), and a series of Opera Gala performances, performed on Chicago's north shore and at the Acorn Theatre in Three Oaks, MI. A frequent performer at the Acorn Theatre, John regularly performs on the popular Christmas at the Acorn concert every season. Upcoming appearances include the world premier of Gustavo Leone's opera, *The Leader*, with the Latino Music Festival in Chicago and Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* with the Chicago Chamber Orchestra.

Currently a full-time chorus member at Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Grant Park Festival Chorus, John is also a member of the Board of Governors for the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA). In addition, he is a member of the Board of Advisors for Governors State University Center for Performing Arts in University Park, IL, where he initiated a series of operatic programs called "Opera Up Close."

**Pianist Marta Johnson Lettovsky** is active as a music director, pianist and vocal coach in the Chicago area. Marta has conducted for Light Opera Works and Chicago Folks Operetta, and has appeared with Circle Theatre, Starkid Productions, and The James Downing Theatre. She is the Music Director at Emerald City Theatre, the pianist for the Lyric Opera's *OperaKids* program as well as the outreach program at Music of the Baroque, and spent five years as music director for Chicago Opera Theater for Teens, sponsored by COT and After School Matters. She is the Music Director for Church of the Advent in Logan Square. Additionally, Marta has been an apprentice with International Institute of Vocal Arts in Chiari, Italy and with the Sherill Milnes VOICE Experience in Orlando, Florida.