



## SELECT BALTIMORE OPERA OPTIONS

### OPERA BALTIMORE

operabaltimore.org

A new company that hopes to produce its first opera late this year or early 2011.

### OPERA VIVENTE

operavivente.org

Now in its 12th season, Opera Vivente opens "Impressions of Pelleas" on Friday.

### BALTIMORE OPERA THEATRE

baltimoreopera-theatre.net

After a successful performance of "Barber of Seville," look for "Rigoletto" on March 11.

### BALTIMORE CONCERT OPERA

baltimoreconcert-opera.com

A dual show of "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci" will be performed March 19 and 21.

### PEABODY OPERA THEATRE

peabodyopera.org

A good place to check out up-and-coming performers. Next up: "Die Fledermaus" March 10-13.



CAITLIN VINCENT THANKS, CAITLIN VINCENT

## Keeping Baltimore opera in tune with the times

**W**hen a city's arts community is rocked by recession, it takes people such as Caitlin Vincent to keep things going. Vincent, 25, a Seattle native — and Harvard alum — who graduated last year from the Peabody Institute with a master's in vocal performance, is the founder and general director of The Figaro Project. It's an opera showcase attempting to thrive in the same atmosphere that led to the bankruptcy of the Baltimore Opera Company last March. Before The Figaro Project's premiere, a performance of "A Night at the Opera" on Friday, we chatted with Mt. Vernon resident Vincent over e-mail about getting her Project off the ground, writing her own production and why we should (yikes) enjoy opera. **JORDAN BARTEL, B**

#### How did The Figaro Project come about?

The Figaro Project was originally conceived as a way to provide performing opportunities to emerging opera singers. Dozens of opera companies have closed recently because of the economic crisis, and young singers have been hit especially hard by the lack of opportunities. Although The Figaro Project was clearly a way to help young vocalists promote their careers, I realized that it was also a chance to fill a void in the current arts scene. I also wanted The Figaro Project to present opera in a way that would be accessible and affordable to everyone.

**Since many opera companies across the county have closed, including the Baltimore Opera Company, why did you decide to push through with**

#### The Figaro Project?

I don't believe that opera should be a genre that disappears during times of financial hardship. I also don't think that young opera singers should be forced to give up on their dreams just because of bad timing with the economy. The closing of so many opera companies has made it clear that we need to be innovative and imaginative to keep opera from becoming obsolete in our society.

**The Figaro Project's Web site says, "Opera is an art form that can change lives." How so?**

Opera is one of the most honest and meaningful forms of dramatic expression that we have in our society. An audience is able to explore the heights and depths of human emotion through the music, the characters

and the situations presented on stage — it can be an extremely powerful experience.

**If someone is interested in opera, what's the best listening material to start with?**

I would recommend starting with a compilation CD, such as the two-volume *The Greatest Opera Show on Earth*. You will hear some of opera's greatest hits (and biggest stars) without getting burned out by a full-length opera. This was actually the first opera recording that I ever owned and I'm still very fond of it.

**If you wrote your own opera, what would it be about?**

Our May production is actually an adaptation of "The Marriage of Figaro" that I wrote myself. I wanted to perform Mozart's opera in a way that would maintain the integrity of his music but would still be accessible to people without a background in opera. In the end, I decided to write "The Figaro Project," a humorous look at what would happen if opera met its "maker," in this case, Lorenzo Da Ponte, the original librettist for Mozart's opera.

**Why do you think opera has a bad rep? Even when an opera category comes up on "Jeopardy!" contestants cringe.**

Opera has traditionally been a very exclusive club, so people aren't as familiar with it as they are with other styles of music. Its origin as a type of entertainment created by the upper class for the upper class has also left it with a reputation of inaccessibility and snobbery that isn't accurate anymore.

**How do you get more people — especially younger audiences — to enjoy opera?**

Opera can be romantic, comic, sexy, exciting, tragic ... there's something for everyone. With The Figaro Project, I've also been making a particular effort to engage the 20-something crowd: advertising on Facebook, tweeting and posting video trailers on YouTube. As opera audiences keep getting older, the future of the genre now depends on us garnering the interest of the MTV generation.

*Jordan Bartel is the assistant editor at b. E-mail him at jordan@bthesite.com*

## FIGARO PROJECT PERFORMANCES

**"A NIGHT AT THE OPERA,"**  
GERMANO'S TRATTORIA,  
300 S. High St., Little Italy  
Friday 7:30 p.m. \$10 cover

**"LOVE AND MARRIAGE...OF FIGARO,"**  
GERMANO'S TRATTORIA  
April 9 7:30 p.m. \$10 cover

**"THE FIGARO PROJECT,"**  
FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH  
3907 N. Charles St., Charles Village  
May 16 3 p.m. Free



FIGARO MEMBERS STEPHEN CAMPBELL AND NATHAN WYATT THANKS, CAITLIN VINCENT