Official magazine of the non profit corporation "The Sicilian Cultural and Film Festival" Directed by Emanuele Viscuso

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Page 1 Bellini's Sicilian composer "La Sonnambula"

Dolores Ziff and Emanuele Viscuso

The success of the Sicilian Film Festival

The success of the inaugural Sicilian Film Festival in 2006 was very encouraging. It is now renowned throughout the United States and the world and is already quoted in encyclopedias like Wikipedia among the most significant and notable festivals. This festival is a creation of Emanuele Viscuso. Everything started when The Ragusani Nel Mondo association requested to show some movies made by Sicilian directors in Florida. Sicilians, Italians, Americans, and people from every ethnic background enjoyed the festival equally and felt as part of a large family. The Sicilian Film Festival is quickly becoming a showcase for the fruits of Sicilian cultural creativity and offers its supporters a unique and personal opportunity to take part in the creation of this international festival.

The Italian region of Sicily bestowed the special honor of "Sicilians in the world: Ambassador of Culture" on Emanuele Viscuso this past April as a sign of its support and approval of his efforts to establish the Festival. He received this honor along with 17 other people of Sicilian origin from throughout the world, representing various aspects of culture and different vocations. His name also appears, again on Wikipedia, in the list of the most relevant Sicilian-Americans.

Vincenzo Bellini's Sicilian composer "La Sonnambula"

at Florida Grand Opera - Ziff Ballet Opera House

American Soprano Leah Patridge Sings Lead Role. Operatic Legend Renata Scotto Directs

Miami, FL - January 22, 2007 - Florida Grand Opera (FGO) continues the season with a new production of Vincenzo Bellini's La sonnambula. Performances begin on February 10 (7 p.m.), and continue on February 13, 16, 21, 24 (8 p.m.), and February 18 (matinee at 2p.m.). The production then moves to the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Ft. Lauderdale on March 1 and 3 (8 p.m.).

This opera's beautiful bel canto score has attracted leading coloratura sopranos since it premiered in 1831. In 1957 Maria Callas sang Bellini's La sonnambula (with the famed La Scala Company at the Edinburgh Festival) but withdrew before the final performances. The remaining performances were sung to international acclaim by a young Renata Scotto who went on to make a specialty of the role as the sleepwalking Amina. Amina, a simple village girl, is believed to be unfaithful to her lover, but she is vindicated when it is discovered that her nighttime wanderings are carried out in her sleep.

This production, with new sets and costumes designed by Carlo Maria Diappi for FGO's opening season in the Ziff Ballet Opera House, reunites soprano Leah Partridge and director Renata Scotto, who last worked together in FGO's acclaimed 2003 production of La traviata, and is conducted by Richard Bonynge, whose wife, Dame Joan Sutherland, was also a famous Amina.

Leah Partridge joined FGO's Young Artist Studio for the 2002-2003 season, during which she was seen as Serpetta in La finta giardinera and Barbarina in Le nozze di Figaro. She appeared in 2003 as Violetta in La traviata, and returned in 2005 as Lucia de Lamermoor, and last season as Gilda in Rigoletto. Recent international engagements have included Cunegonde in Candide for Genoa and the tile role in Lucia di Lammermoor at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. In the Unites States, Leah has performed with Chicago Opera Theater, Michigan Opera Theatre, Atlanta Opera and FGO.

Renata Scotto, famous for her portrayals of Verdi, Puccini, and bel canto heroines at the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, and major theaters worldwide, made her debut as director at the Met in 1986 with Madama Butterfly, which she subsequently staged for Verona, Genoa, and Ancona in Italy, and Palm Beach Opera, Dallas Opera, and FGO in the United States. Her FGO directorial debut was Tosca with Deborah Voight (2001), followed by La traviata (2003), an opera she first directed in a new production for New York City Opera (1995), telecast on "Live from Lincoln Center," for which she won an Emmy Award. With an active schedule as director and performer, she is also a renowned teacher, and has presented master classes at the top schools and vocal programs throughout the world.

One of the leading opera conductors of the last half century, Maestro Bonynge has conducted in the world's leading opera houses in Europe, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand as well as the Far East. He has received world-wide acclaim as a scholar of bel canto opera and for leading the renaissance of 18th and early-19th century musical theater, such as Les Huguenots (Meyerbeer), Semiramide and Sigismondo (Rossini), La fille du régiment and Lucrezia Borgia (Donizetti), Thérèse (Massenet), Orfeo (Haydn), and I Masnadieri (Verdi), among many others.

Carlo Maria Diappi, a long-time collaborator of director Renata Scotto, originally trained as an architect in Milan, Italy. He has created productions for all the prestigious theaters of Italy, as well as for theaters and festivals throughout Europe. Besides opera, drama, and ballet, he has also designed costumes for several movies.

What is the Sicilian Film Festival?

Usually, if you were to think of people of Sicilian origin in the world of cinema, you would think of Vittorio de Seta, or, Oscar winner Giuseppe Tornatore. However, the famous director Frank Capra was born in a town outside of Palermo; and Italian-American Vincente Mannelli's grandfather was Sicilian, as was even Susan Sarandon's mother! Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, author of "The Leopard"; Camilleri, author of the highly successful television series "Commissario Montalbano"; music composer and film director Battiato; and, last, Emanuele Crialese whose film, "Nuovomondo" represented Italy at the 2007 Oscars, are others who are also of Sicilian origin and standouts in the world of cinema. The international recognition of this cinematographic talent is important for the country of Italy (and, of course, its largest region, Sicily); and, now, thanks to the efforts of the Sicilian Film Festival, Sicilian artists have a legitimate vehicle to better display their genius to the world.

In addition to promoting Sicilian cinematographic culture, the Sicilian Film Festival is a promoter of culture in general and, especially here, Sicily has much to offer. Archimedes, the ancient Greek mathematician was Sicilian. Jawhar as-Siqilli (the Sicilian) founded Cairo in 969 and was Sicilian. Nobel prize winners Salvatore Quasimodo and Luigi Pirandello; composer Vincenzo Bellini and artist Antonello da Messina; writers Leonardo Sciascia and Vincenzo Consolo; and, let's not forget Giovanni Verga and Vitaliano Brancati were also Sicilian. Italy's most popular showman Fiorello, is also Sicilian. Aicon Yachts, among Italy's primary shipbuilder, is a Sicilian company.

The Sicilian Film Festival, therefore, will be an international showcase for all of the best of Sicily, including its culture, history, art, music, food, and people.

The 2007 Sicilian Film Festival

The second annual Sicilian Film Festival will take place in April 2007 with a special preview in March 2007. Many interesting and internationally-oriented events will accompany the Sicilian Film Festival, including trips, cruises, Gala dinners, and other gatherings in Miami and abroad, creating a sort of cosmopolitan "club" of *people passionate about Sicily*. Our international operating committee, formed of leaders in the Italian and Sicilian community such as Alberto Rusconi, Franco Battiato, Domitilla Alessi, Camillo Ricordi, Pino Farinotti, Carlo Castellaneta, Claudio Angelini, Pierleone Marzotto, Alessandro Quasimodo, Margherita Pirri Ardizzone, Mattew Platania and institutions such as the University of Perugia, the Experimental Center for Cinematographic arts in Rome, the Leo Matiz Foundation in Bogota, the Modern Italian Network & Modern Sicilian Network and others are working collaboratively to create and promote the Sicilian Film Festival throughout the world.

The great city of Miami, Florida will host the Sicilian Film Festival again in 2007 together with other cities all around the world. Miami will provide the Festival with the ability to continue to be an international fair for Sicilian culture and a cultural meeting place for all Italian-American communities and groups in America. Participants will be treated to a variety of events including films in Italian with English subtitles, parties, presentations, exhibitions, concerts, and other unique experiences. The Festival has already received a high degree of interest from potential sponsors in America and abroad. The idea of the Sicilian Film Festival has also spawned initiatives around the world and in Sicily, such as a Organ Music Festival in the churches of Castelbuono, outside of Palermo, Sicily. In cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, Bogota, London, Paris, and Lisbon, delegations of the Sicilian Film Festival are being organized to expand the Festival internationally. And, MSC Cruises (www.msccruises.com) has recently proposed to show a preview of the Sicilian Film Festival aboard a special cruise for Italian-Americans in March 2007. (Please also see www.italiancruise.org for information about the cruise).

One of the major attractions at this year's Festival will be Franco Battiato's film "Musikanten"* a film inspired by the life of Ludwig van Beethoven. Also, the director Manuel Giliberti will be at the Festival to present his film, "Lettere dalla Sicilia"*, a story about an 18th century English family's visit to Sicily. In addition to the films and the film trailers, actual theater, musicals, photographic exhibits, and other events are also planned for this year's Festival. Thanking the support of a pool of Sicilian publishing houses and starting from Miami, the festival is also opening a series of corners with Italian books to serve all the local Italian community.



Florida Grand Opera - Ziff Ballet Opera House

About Florida Grand Opera & Ticket info

Florida Grand Opera was formed in June 1994 by the merger of Greater Miami Opera, founded in 1941, and Opera Guild of Fort Lauderdale, founded in 1945. Celebrating its 66th season of continuous performances, Florida Grand Opera stands as one of the oldest performing arts organizations in Florida. In addition to producing standard repertoire, Florida Grand Opera also presents lesser known operas, as well as commissioning and producing new operas. Since 1985, under the leadership of General Director Robert M. Heuer, the organization has produced more than 80 main-stage productions, including more than 25 operas never before seen in South Florida. Annually, performances are attended by over 90,000 people, and its education and outreach programs serve over 50,000 students. FGO offers several highly successful outreach and educational programs, including its internationally-recognized Young Artist Studio Program. Founded in 1984, the program attracts young singers who train and enhance their professional skills during a 35-week Miami residency.

Ticket Information

For tickets please call 1-800-741-1010 or visit www.fgo.org.

Florida Grand Opera

Vincenso Bellini's La sonnambula

Sung in Italian with English and Spanish Projected
Titles

Carnival Center for the Performing Arts in Miami

February 10 (7p.m.)

February 13, 16, 21 & 24 (8 p.m.)

February 18 (matinee at 2 p.m.)

Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Ft. Lauderdale

March 1, 3 (8p.m.)

Amina: Leah Patridge
Elvino: Bruce Sledge

Partidiscon Partidiscon

Rodolfo: David Pittsinger

Lisa: Jennifer Zetlan
Conductor: Richard Bonynge
Director: Renata Scotto

Set & Costume Designer: Carlo Diappi

Lighting Designer: Guy Simard
New Production: Florida Grand Opera &

Michigan Opera Theatre

From Sunday, Feb 04, 2007 Especial/El Nuevo Herald

Renata Scotto no duerme en sus laureles

By SEBASTIAN SPRENG

Su nombre es sinónimo de "bel canto" italiano. Su exquisita Ámina la hizo célebre de la noche a la mañana y, a través de cincuenta años, permanece como indómito baluarte de un estilo donde es referencia ineludible. En Miami, la legendaria Renata Scotto dirige La Sonámbula de Bellini que la consagró como soprano. Con el mismo afán perfeccionista de antaño, la flamante ganadora del Premio Opera News irradia una vitalidad efervescente que contagia con la frescura y sencillez propia de los grandes. Está claro que para Scotto, quien en Chicago dirigirá a Angela Gheorgiu en La Boheme (ópera y ciudad de su debut americano) y en Roma y Nueva York dará cursos de perfeccionamiento, dormirse en los laureles no figura en sus planes y el sonambulismo, sólo cabe en escena.

¿Cómo recuerda su consagración en Edimburgo al reemplazar a Maria Callas?

Como la oportunidad esperada en un papel justo para mí y dirigida por el magistral Antonino Votto. Aprendí la ópera en una semana pero, su preparación fue invaluable. La recepción fue extraordinaria. Era la gira de la Scala, toda Italia estaba pendiente y me abrió las puertas del mundo a los 22 años. Moraleja: estar siempre preparado, porque la oportunidad puede llegar sin aviso y definir un magnífico comienzo o un desastre.

¿Tuvo miedo?

¡Nada!, la escena es mi casa y cantar es dar, es para los demás, nunca canté para mí. Ya a los seis años trepaba al balcón a cantarle a los vecinos, y luego desde mi ventana cantaba a los transeúntes las canciones popularizadas por Gigli y Schipa. Después, me deslumbré viendo a Tito Gobbi en *Rigoletto* y decidí mi vocación.

¿Cómo define a Bellini?

Como el primer compositor romántico con un estilo que se acerca a la medida humana, alejándose de lo mitológico, hasta entonces la temática central de la ópera. Bellini me despertó el ansia por captar la esencia del bel canto romántico; por cultivar el estilo e instrumentar su conexión con Verdi y el verismo. Influenciado por Mozart, usó la voz como instrumento. Si Donizetti fue el gran maestro y Rossini un comediante brillante, Bellini fue el precursor. Además, Bellini anuncia a Chopin, quien heredó sus rubatos y cadencias.

¿Algún favorito belliniano?

Canté Sonámbula, Norma, Los Puritanos, Capuletos y Montescos, Zaira y La Extranjera; lamentablemente no canté Beatriz de Tenda, ni El pirata, que luego dirigí. Cuando todo está al servicio del personaje no hay favoritos, son como hijos.

Leah Partridge será Amina.

Tiene la vulnerabilidad, la voz, y el porte perfectos para el personaje.

¿Y Amina?

Encarna la exquisitez poética de la melodía belliniana. Es una joyita. La canté por toda Italia y todo el mundo ¡y tantas veces con Alfredo Kraus! Cuando cantamos en Turín, tuvo un pequeño accidente y no pudo llegar a tiempo. Público y elenco debimos esperarlo casi una hora. Fue comiquísimo porque justo Elvino entra cantando "Perdonen, mi breve retraso". ¡Estallamos todos en carcajadas!

¿Cambia la perspectiva al dirigir?

Empiezo de cero. Ya no son más mis *partenaires*, todos los personajes son iguales, cada uno con su mundo. Aquí tengo una ventaja sobre otros directores: conozco la obra mejor que nadie y sé lo que espera la audiencia. Esta música es parte de mí y sé bien como traducirla.

Muchos nuevos directores "radicales" no saben música.

¡Peor! ¡Ni siquiera les gusta! La música no les importa, sólo "su concepto". Y el concepto debe nacer de la música, jamás al revés. El buen gusto debe primar para realzar la nobleza de éste género único que combina todas las artes.

¿Cual es su idea para ésta producción?

En mi *Sonámbula* todo parte del sueño de Amina. Un sueño que se convierte en pesadilla, todo es difuso hasta que despierta. Con la realidad todo --literalmente-- se aclara. Ambientada en época, es simbólica, la luz lo dice todo. Es mi quinta colaboración con Carlo Diappi, gran escenógrafo y figurinista italiano con quien hice *La Wally*, *El pirata*, *La médium* y *Norma*.

En la dirección orquestal tiene otro especialista: Richard Bonynge.

Agradezco a Robert Heuer [director de la FGO] que tuvo la excelente idea de convocarnos. Ambos crecimos "en el bel canto" y me dirigió en el Met en *Lucia*. Es la primera vez que trabajamos de este lado del escenario y coincidimos plenamente.

¿Cuál es la situación actual del canto?

Hay voces bellísimas pero, muchos cantantes no tienen una idea clara sobre repertorios. Quieren hacer todo a la vez. Antes nos protegían los directores, directamente no nos dejaban. Hoy reina el agente y cuantos más contratos, mejor. No los dejan madurar naturalmente. Se extrañan aquellos maestros que acompañaban durante todo el proceso. Hoy nadie tiene tiempo para conocerse.

Aquí trabajó mucho pero esta ocasión es especial.

¡Especialísima! Para esta nueva producción necesitaba un nuevo teatro y el sueño se hizo realidad. Es una ocasión tan feliz como el final de *Sonámbula* ¡Una de las poquísimas óperas que termina bien!

Sebastian Spreng

From Miami Herald

FGO soars in La Sonnambula

FGO's Sonnambula soared to surprising heights, the result of a true ensemble effort.

By LAWRENCE A. JOHNSON

For all their fame and popularity, bel canto operas require an even greater suspension of belief from audiences than most works in the genre. Action is often nonexistent with long stretches of exposition that contain much singing with very little actually happening onstage. Bellini's *La Sonnambula* contains all those elements, among the reasons for its place on the edges of the regular repertoire. But it also offers some of Bellini's most inspired music as well as the choice role of Amina, which has served as a star vehicle for sopranos with the coloratura brilliance to raise the opera above its limitations.

Florida Grand Opera's new production of *La Sonnambula*, which opened Saturday at the Ziff Ballet Opera House, reunites Leah Partridge with director Renata Scotto, her partner in the company's 2003 *La Traviata*. The staging and marketing emphasis are clearly meant to capitalize on the popular Partridge, who indeed acquitted herself well opening night.

But the resounding success of Saturday's performance was due to several other factors as well: an exceptionally strong supporting cast, an imaginative production conceived by Scotto, and the loving musical expertise of conductor Richard Bonynge. Though it took a while to get off the ground, FGO's Sonnambula soared to surprising heights, the result of a true ensemble effort.

The slender plot involves Amina, the Swiss girl who is overjoyed to be marrying the farmer Elvino. The pure-hearted Amina suffers from one troubling defect: a penchant for sleepwalking. When her nocturnal roving brings her to the room of the visiting Count, the village is scandalized and her angry fiancée calls off the ceremony. Ultimately, Elvino realizes his mistake and forgives the innocent Amina, who celebrates her happiness with *Ah! non giunge*, one of the most florid and spectacular arias in the literature.

The revisionist staging is a generally effective mix of tradition and modernist edge. Carlo Diappi's attractive 19th-century Swiss costumes complement the black-and-white minimalism of his sets. A large silver shade tree dominates Act 1, turning to bare, dead trees in Act 2 reflecting Amina's tragic state, with primary colors belatedly introduced in the happy denouement.

Scotto's direction had its old-fashioned moments but there were also several imaginative touches that opened up the action delightfully: the wedding bunting around the Ziff hall, a stage extension that brought Partridge close to the audience in the final scene, and the riotous shower of confetti that celebrates Amina's wedding at the curtain.

Partridge assuredly has the high voice, agility and top register for the opera's coloratura fireworks. But, while singing with her customary polish and pure radiant tone, the soprano seemed cautious and tentative early on, and conservative in her decorations. Partridge seemed to gain confidence after intermission, with a beautifully sensitive *Ah*, *non credea mirarti*. She rose to the challenge of *Ah! non giunge*, with bright top notes, greater spontaneity and the requisite coloratura flash.

As Elvino, Bruce Sledge displayed a plangent lyric tenor, assured stage presence and great facility in Bellini's long lines. His refined vocalism handled the considerable demands faultlessly, throwing off top C's and D's with ease and blending fluently with Partridge in their duets.

David Pittsinger deftly elevated the thankless role of Rodolfo. The American bass sang with a robust, warmly rounded tone, and his dignified Count made the transition from opportunistic letch to beneficent father figure more convincing than most.

As Amina's jealous rival, Lisa, Jennifer Zetlan was an aptly spunky presence, her high soubrette soprano tackling the coloratura turns of her Act 2 aria with superb panache. Liam Moran's imposing bass made Alessio somewhat less of a cipher. The FGO Chorus was at its finest, with nimble, richly projected and full-bodied corporate singing under Douglas Kinney Frost's direction.

Abaut RENATA SCOTTO

Cronología:

1934: Nace en Savona, Italia.

1952: Premio en Milán y debut en Savona en La Traviata.

1953: Debut en La Scala, La Wally.

1957: Consagración en *La Sonámbula* reemplazando a Callas, Edimburgo.

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1960: Debut americano en La Boheme, Chicago.

1965: Debut en el MET, Madama Butterfly.

1977: La Boheme, primer telecast Live-from-the-MET.

1986: Debut como directora en Madama Butterfly, MET.

2002: Establece Renata Scotto Academy, Westchester, NY.

2007: Dirige La Sonámbula, Florida Grand Opera.

More pre-events for the Sicilian Film Festival

Besides **The Sonnambula** by the Sicilian composer Vincenzo Bellini, that the Sicilian Film Festival, (which is coming April 9-16 to Miami Beach Cinemateque and other venues), strongly recommends seeing, the festival is proud to inform about Sicilian Culture.

Greece was the historical background of Sicily 2000 years ago. On Sunday February 25 a pre-event of the Sicilian Film Festival dedicated to Greece and "Magna Grecia" (as the whole area including Sicily and south Italy was called at that time) will be hosted from 4pm to 8pm in the house of the president of the SFF Emanuele Viscuso located at 8300 Hawthorne Ave. Miami Beach, FL 33141. The name of the event is "Magna Grecia Art". Please, read article on next page.

Another event, strongly recommended by the Sicilian Film Festival, is the ONLY **official Oscar Party in Miami** benefiting our friend the Miami Beach Cinematheque.

Advanced tickets required available online at \$175 or \$145 for **Miami Beach Film Society** members.

Please, see flyer below.

For more info and reservations Email emanuele@bellsouth.net



Sponsor the Sicilian Film Festival

The second-annual Sicilian Film Festival will take place this March and April and include:

- A special preview during a South Caribbean cruise in March
- A Festival dedicated to Sicilian film and culture in Miami and Miami Beach, Florida in April
- a series of cultural events all over the world.

The realization of the 2007 Sicilian Film Festival is a very ambitious effort and no important cultural event would be possible without the gracious help of sponsors, friends and supporters, including Italian, Italian-American, and related associations and cultural organizations. I would like you to consider the possibility of being part of this project as much more than an ordinary spectator, but also as a sponsor or a promoter of this special event in your local area.

As you may already know, the Festival is organized as a non-profit corporation, *The Sicilian Cultural and Film Festival*, and all the proceeds of the event will be donated to this entity so that the Festival can continue to be a major attraction for all *people passionate about Sicily* and its culture in the future. Please see on here www.sicilianfilmfestival.com/sponsors.html for last year's Festival sponsors.

Your support in becoming a sponsor and promoting the *Sicilian Film Festival* would be a great help to us in making this year's Festival a tremendous success.

The Sicilian Film Festival thanks you in advance for your support and cooperation and will remember well all those who assist in our efforts to promote Sicilian culture around the world.

Please, feel free to request the files

- "Create your own Sponsorship"
- "Concept, target, exposure"

Thank you

Emanuele Viscuso

President Sicilian Film Festival 8300 Hawthorne Ave. Miami Beach, Florida 33141 Ph. +1 305 7104593 emanuele@bellsouth.net www.SicilianFilmFestival.com

Magna Grecia Art

Another pre-event of the Sicilian Film Festival dedicated to Greece and "Magna Grecia"

Greece was the historical background of Sicily 2000 years ago. On Sunday February 25 a pre-event of the Sicilian Film Festival dedicated to Greece and "Magna Grecia" (as the whole area including Sicily and south Italy was called at that time) will be hosted from 4pm to 8pm in the house of the president of the SFF Emanuele Viscuso located at 8300 Hawthorne Ave. Miami Beach, FL 33141. The house is under restyling and the final look will be neoclassic but Greek columns are already decorating its entrance. No better place for such a party.

Among the invitees to the event Sanford and Dolores Ziff.

The event will feature artist and works inspired by Greece and Magna Grecia. The artist Anastasia The Great, organizer of the event, will prepare a Greek lunch served with Greek wines while a Greek musical background will entertain the guests.

Anastasia The Great, Angela Crucitti, Herbert Hofer, Migguel Anggelo (it is not a mistake: it's written in this way) and Emanuele Viscuso himself will feature their art works dedicated to Greece

The dress code? White!

The next event held at Villa Viscuso will be the final fund raising party benefiting the Sicilian Film Festival in April. For info go to:

www.sicilianfilmfestival.com



The future appearance of Villa Viscuso in Miami Beach

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