



Le Nozze di Figaro



Glory Denied



Madama Butterfly



The Mark of Cain

otos by Robert J. Saferstein

MISSION

Such musical, expressive and polished performances deserve greater attention from the community.

~ Opera News

Chelsea Opera produces fully staged operas with chamber orchestra and a concert series. Its production standard, so aptly cited by Opera News in a February 2011 rave review, is "small scale and high impact". Founded in 2004, Chelsea Opera addresses the needs of professional singers to practice their craft in a supportive environment in a New York City venue, while offering the opera going public quality productions of new and classic repertoire at an affordable price (\$15-\$45). Performances take place at St. Peters in Chelsea, a landmark church whose intimacy and superior acoustics make it an attractive space for opera.

HISTORY

Founded in 2004 by Lynne Hayden-Findlay and Leonarda Priore, Chelsea Opera will mark its 10th Anniversary in 2013-2014. From its very first production, *Suor Angelica*, to 2011's *Madama Butterfly*, Chelsea Opera is well versed in standard repertoire but has broadened its focus to include new opera.

In 2007 Lee Hoiby's *The Scarf* gave the company its first experience consulting with a living composer and opened the company to Tom Cipullo's proposal to produce his 2007 opera *Glory Denied*. The work was intriguing, its subject compelling, its chamber orchestration and compact staging perfectly suited to Chelsea Opera's capacity, and it offered the opportunity to work side by side with the composer. The 2010 production won raves from The New York Times and Opera News, bringing the company into the national spotlight, and establishing Chelsea Opera's competence and position in the world of contemporary opera.

Since then, composers have submitted new works to the company resulting in the world premiere of the Harris/Quinn one-act, *The Mark of Cain* (November 2012), and a Manhattan premiere of Fagin/Quinn's *A Distant Love: Songs of John and Abigail Adams* (June 2013).

Composers, opera producers, critics, and donors have commented on the consistently high quality of Chelsea Opera's productions: "I was especially impressed with the quality of the voices and the high level of the orchestra" (Ben Moore, composer). "You work hard to get the best singers in the city and get the word out, not a small feat in NY, and it shows" (Rina Elisha, New Rochelle Opera). "The performers and production did everything possible to make the opera a success" (Opera News on *The Mark of Cain*).

Chelsea Opera opened its 10th Anniversary season October 11/12 with *Ballymore – Part 1: Winners* by Richard Wargo and Seymour Barab's *La Pizza con Funghi*. Two concerts featuring contemporary works, *More Songs for My Brother* and *Musical Portraits...the songs of Anne Phillips, Ben Moore and Tom Cipullo* follow December 6 and March 14. Act 1 of Benjamin Wenzelberg's *The Sleeping Beauty* was workshopped in July 2013 and excerpts will be performed with orchestra on January 17, 2014 in collaboration with the Bloomingdale School of Music. The season culminates June 13/14, 2014 with Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land* using Murry Sidlin's reduced chamber orchestra edition. Finally, Chelsea Opera presented Henry Mollicone's *The Face on the Barroom Floor* and the NY Premiere of *Emperor Norton*, conducted by the composer in November 2014, and returns to standard rep in June 2015 with Puccini's *Tosca*.

CHELSEA OPERA MAINSTAGE PRODUCTION HISTORY

2015-2016	Nov	<i>Glory Denied</i> (revival)	Tom Cipullo
2014-2015	Nov	<i>The Face on the Barroom Floor</i> and <i>Emperor Norton</i> (NY Premiere)	Henry Mollicone
	June	<i>Tosca</i> (concert staging)	Giacomo Puccini
		<i>A Distant Love – Songs of John and Abigail</i> Adams (Adams National Historical Park/NEA)	Gary S. Fagin
2013-2014	Oct	<i>Ballymore, Part One – Winners</i> <i>La Pizza con Funghi</i>	Richard Wargo Seymour Barab
	June	<i>The Tender Land</i>	Aaron Copland
2012-2013	Nov	<i>Canticle II, opus 51 – Abraham and Isaac</i> The Mark of Cain (world premiere)	Benjamin Britten Matthew Harris
	Jun	<i>A Distant Love – Songs of John and Abigail</i> Adams (Manhattan premiere)	Gary S. Fagin
2011-2012	Nov	<i>The Medium</i>	Gian Carlo Menotti
	Jun	<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Giacomo Puccini
2010-2011	Nov	<i>Glory Denied</i>	Tom Cipullo
	Jun	<i>Bermudas</i> <i>This is the rill speaking</i>	Lee Hoiby Lee Hoiby
2009-2010	Nov	<i>Amahl and the Night Visitors</i>	Gian Carlo Menotti
	Jun	<i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i>	W.A. Mozart
2008-2009	Nov	<i>The Scarf</i> <i>The Bear</i>	Lee Hoiby William Walton
	Jun	<i>Suor Angelica</i> (5 th Anniversary)	Giacomo Puccini
2007-2008	Nov	<i>Gianni Schicchi</i>	Giacomo Puccini
	Jun	<i>The Ballad of Baby Doe</i>	Douglas Moore
2006-2007	Dec	<i>Amahl and the Night Visitors</i>	Gian Carlo Menotti
	May	<i>Don Giovanni</i>	W. A. Mozart
2005-2006	Dec	<i>Amahl and the Night Visitors</i>	Gian Carlo Menotti
	Jun	<i>Pagliacci</i>	Ruggero Leoncavallo
2004-2005	Jun	<i>Suor Angelica</i>	Giacomo Puccini
	Jan	<i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>	Pietro Mascagni

CO-FOUNDERS/CO-PRODUCERS



Leonarda Priore continues to actively pursue her career as a singer/performer in addition to her duties as one half of the duo that formed and continues to develop the important mission of Chelsea Opera. Organizing, implementing and helping to make magic happen on a shoestring is one of the things that she finds most intriguing and a challenge that she treasures. Among the many hats she wears as a co-producer, she handles props, set decoration, website development/updating, and the creation and implementation of all graphic needs, to name a few. While not a stage director herself, she has co-directed on productions with Chelsea Opera as well as with Central Florida Lyric Opera. Favorite opera roles performed include La Zia Principessa (*Suor Angelica*), Augusta (*Ballad of Baby Doe*), Zita (*Gianni Schicchi*), Dame Quickly (*Falstaff*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Santuzza (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Mother/Grandmother (*Little Red Riding Hood*), Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Katisha (*Mikado*), Lady Jane (*Patience*), and the title role in *Carmen*. She also has extensive oratorio, featured artist and concert credits. Upcoming performances include a performance of Joseph Canteloube's *Chants d'Auvergne* with the Centre Symphony Orchestra. She recently reprised La Zia Principessa (*Suor Angelica*/Regina Opera), about which [The Brooklyn Daily Eagle](#) wrote: "Her heart was cast in stone, and [her] stern and vengeful powerful and deep mezzo made this scene an indelible one."



Lynne Hayden-Findlay frequently directs and designs costumes. She co-directed the inaugural production of *Suor Angelica*, and directed 2005's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, 2007's *Don Giovanni* and 2010's *Glory Denied* about which [Opera News](#) wrote: she "masterfully reinforced [the characters'] interplay through her blocking, which explored shifting configurations of perspectives." She directed and choreographed the 2006 and 2009 productions of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, 2010's *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Empire Opera's *Suor Angelica* in August 2007. Of *Madama Butterfly*, [Opera News](#) noted that she "achieved much that was delicate and insightful. 'Un bel di' was played not as the prima donna's big moment but as a part of a conversation between Cio-Cio-San and Suzuki." Before retiring from singing in 2006, her roles included Nannetta, Susanna, Zerlina, Oscar, Musetta and Adele. With OperaFestival di Roma, she sang Suor Genovieffa (*Suor Angelica*) and First Lady while covering Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*). Ms. Hayden-Findlay holds a B.A. in Theatre from SUNY/New Paltz, where she directed and choreographed several productions including the Tom Jones/Harvey Schmidt musical *Celebration*. She earned an MBA with distinction in Strategic Management from Pace University. She is CELTA certified and teaches English-as-a-second language at University Settlement.

MUSIC DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR



Samuel McCoy served as Assistant Conductor in 2012 for the world premiere of *The Mark of Cain* and in 2013 as Assistant Conductor for the NY premiere of *Ballymore – Part One: Winners* by Richard Wargo, and Guest Conductor for Seymour Barab’s *La Pizza con Funghi*. He has served as Conductor for Opera Moderne and Associate Conductor for dell'Arte Opera Ensemble in NYC, as well as Guest Conductor for Rogue Opera in Ashland (OR). Maestro McCoy

previously served as Principal Conductor for Puget Sound Concert Opera in Seattle (WA). He has served as Assistant Conductor for North Carolina Opera and two seasons of the Prototype Festival. He also served as Cover Conductor with the Oklahoma City Philharmonic and led the Oklahoma City University Orchestra in performances at home and abroad. In June 2014 he conducts Chelsea Opera’s 10th Anniversary season production of Copland's *The Tender Land*.

PRODUCTION REHEARSAL PIANISTS



Gary Norden has partnered Metropolitan opera stars Roberta Peters and the late Jerome Hines as well as New York City Opera stars Clamma Dale, Marianna Nicolesco and Eugenie Grunewald in concerts throughout the United States and Europe. He has also performed with Met regulars Licia Albanese, Ferruccio Tagliavini, Ariel Bybee and Dianne Elias. Mr. Norden served as vocal coach for Oscar winners Olympia Dukakis and Kevin Kline. It was also his privilege to play

two recitals at the White House as well as a concert for HRM Prince Andrew, Duke of York. He has served as rehearsal pianist for *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Madama Butterfly* and *The Tender Land*.



Kristen Kemp has been a vocal coach and accompanist for over 20 years, working for companies including Cincinnati Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, Opera Pacific, Sarasota Opera, Opera New Jersey, and the Opera Theater and Music Festival of Lucca. Ms. Kemp has been on music staff at Sarasota Opera since 2003 and has been the Studio Artist Director since 2010. In addition to her opera work, Ms. Kemp has given collaborative recitals in New York, Washington DC, Seattle, Cincinnati, and

Sarasota. She has also been a member of the coaching staff for V.O.I.C.E.xperience, directed by Sherrill Milnes and Maria Zouves. Ms. Kemp received her Masters Degree in Vocal Accompaniment and Artist Diploma in Opera Coaching from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Kenneth Griffiths and Donna Loewy. She joined Chelsea Opera for the 2013 NY premiere of Richard Wargo’s *Ballymore – Part One: Winners* and Seymour Barab’s *La Pizza con Funghi*.

REVIEWS

WWW.THEATERSCENE.NET/MUSIC/HENRY-MOLLICONE-CHELSEA-OPERA/JEAN-BALLARD-TEREPKA/ : The Face on the Barroom Floor & Emperor Norton

NEW YORK CITY 11/5/14

On Friday, November 7, 2014, in the high, dark, night-time space of St. Peter's Church in Chelsea, the eleventh season of Chelsea Opera was opened with two one-act operas by composer Henry Mollicone and librettist John S. Bowman. It was a marvelous evening. All seven singers, each accomplished artists on their own, displayed at every moment a palpable and dynamic collaboration. The artistic coherence and integrity of members of the Chelsea Opera, both on stage and behind the scenes, together with the energy of the all the musicians' engagement with their audience, were impressive and exhilarating. . . .The evening would have been successful just because of the music. But the overall integrity of the production of the paired operas was significantly enhanced by Lynne Hayden-Findlay's first-rate stage direction, making the best possible use of the singers' physical energy and skills in fighting, falling and dancing, and by the inspired set.

THE NEW YORK TIMES: *The Tender Land*

NEW YORK CITY 6/16/14

. . . Aaron Copland's "The Tender Land," . . . received a rare revival on Friday and Saturday from Chelsea Opera. . . Scruppy and ambitious, with a taste for recent and lesser-heard music, Chelsea Opera should be commended for giving "The Tender Land" an outing. Yet Saturday's performance, while loving, didn't disprove the old consensus about the opera. Studded with moments of arresting lyrical beauty, it never quite gets off the ground as a drama. . . .the score is soaring and sweet, in Copland's "Appalachian Spring" mode, and it was played smoothly on Saturday by a small orchestra conducted by Samuel McCoy. Highlights among the cast were the soprano Joanie Brittingham, who sang Laurie with lucid diction, and the baritone Peter Kendall Clark, a resonant Top. The finest passage in the score is the aching quintet that closes the first act, and here the performance was at its finest, too: polished and eloquent. – Zachary Woolfe

BLOGCRITICS: *The Tender Land*

NEW YORK CITY 6/15/14

At St. Peter's Church on June 13-14, marking the 60th anniversary of the opera, New York's Chelsea Opera celebrated its own 10th season by staging a small-scale but large-spirited production of *The Tender Land* in a version with a score artfully reduced for chamber orchestra by Murry Sidlin. The self-styled "little opera company that could" proved its mettle by cramming the pews □ full of music lovers for an inspired and inspiring production.

The cast assembled for the simple, tightly woven story was strong from top to bottom. Company co-founder Leonarda Priore's deep mezzo cut authoritatively through the soupy air of the church on a humid night to establish the story's emotional focus as Ma Moss, the loving, protective single mother of two sweet but restless girls growing up on a struggling prairie farm. Soprano Joanie Brittingham brought an ideal combination of crystalline tone and focused personality to the role of elder daughter Laurie, about to be feted as the first member of the family to graduate high school.

The drama arises with an overnight romance. Laurie meets Martin (powerful-voiced tenor Chad Kranak, who boasts stunning high notes) when he and his fellow vagabond, the comically ravenous Top (played with amusing bluster by baritone Peter Kendall Clark) arrive just as Grandpa Moss (profound bass Steven Fredericks) needs help with the harvest.

I'm very glad to have had the opportunity to hear this beautiful work in a top-notch production by Chelsea Opera, which should certainly rank as one of the country's preeminent "small" opera companies. - Jon Sobel

OPERA NEWS: *Ballymore (Part 1): Winners & La Pizza con Funghi*

NEW YORK CITY 10/11/13

Chelsea Opera opened its 2013–14 season in sensational style with an engaging pair of one-act operas — Richard Wargo's *Ballymore (Part 1): Winners* and Seymour Barab's *Pizza con Funghi*. Both works featured the same cast of four singers, directed by Chelsea Opera co-founder Lynne Hayden-Findlay. The performances took place on October 11 and 12, in the company's usual home, St. Peter's Church in Manhattan.

Both [Samantha Britt as Mag and Chad Kranak as Joe] were remarkable, fully capturing the audience's love and empathy. The opera and its performance made one eager to hear the entire work, hopefully as cleverly staged and well performed as Hayden-Findlay's production.

Our four singers [Britt, Kranak, Darcy Dunn and Robert Balonek] here jumped from the more subdued and serious demands of Wargo's *Winners* to a madcap, virtuoso performance of a perfect opera buffa. This charming and hilarious work, emotively conducted by Samuel McCoy, had great appeal both to old opera hands and to first-time operagoers. It made a perfect foil to *Winners*. - ARLO MCKINNON

OPERA NEWS: *A Distant Love: Songs of John and Abigail Adams*

NEW YORK CITY 6/14/13

Baritone Peter Kendall Clark gave an admirable portrayal of John Adams. Although his voice initially sounded a bit rough, it soon warmed up and remained clear and strong for the entirety of the act. In addition to solid vocalism and crisp diction, Clark brought an expressive face and requisite abandon to his performance. . .

As Abigail, soprano Victoria Tralongo gave a superb performance.... she created some truly gorgeous sounds, her quick vibrato shimmering as her voice soared easily into the church. There were a number of poignant moments, yet Tralongo also made the most of Abigail's wry sense of humor. Tralongo's strong dramatic instincts allowed her to paint a convincing portrait of a woman dutifully fulfilling her responsibilities to her family and community, all the while subverting her own understandable frustrations in order to provide moral support to her husband.

Director Lynne Hayden-Findlay, a cofounder of Chelsea Opera with Leonarda Priore, made excellent use of the church's deep chancel: as the main action unfolded in the front area, the rear portion served as a second "room" in which the non-singing character would go about his/her daily business — sweeping the floor, reading letters, etc. The costumes and minimal set did a fine job of setting the time and location, while the atmospheric lighting clearly marked the passage of time and seasons - DEREK GRETEN-HARRISON

OPERA NEWS: *Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac & The Mark of Cain*

NEW YORK CITY 11/8/12

Chelsea Opera opened its 2012–13 season with a program consisting of two theatrical works based on episodes in the Book of Genesis. These were Benjamin Britten's *Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac* and the world premiere of *The Mark of Cain*, a one-act opera by Matthew Harris. The bill was presented in St. Peter's Church in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood on November 8, 9 and 19.

Chelsea Opera presented *Canticle II* with tenor Eapen Leubner and treble Benjamin Perry Wenzelberg, accompanied at the piano by Steven Crawford, who also conducted the Harris opera. Leubner gave a finely conceived interpretation of Abraham. His lyric tenor voice splendidly captured the tone of Britten's music, which is dramatic but not operatic. And his acting fit the character perfectly. Wenzelberg was an able partner, with a lovely, well-controlled voice... Lynne Hayden-Findlay's stage direction was simple and to the point, exactly what was called for in this rather gentle, ultimately joyful work.

The Mark of Cain (2011) was written in collaboration with Terry Quinn, a highly experienced librettist. The performance featured a cast of emerging singers, some of who demonstrated an enormous level of talent... Pride of place goes to baritone Brace Negron in the role of Cain. Negron has a powerful, dramatic voice and a commanding stage presence. Mezzo-soprano Blythe Gaissert proved a strong performer as Zillah. The performers and production did everything possible to make the opera a success. - ARLO MCKINNON

OPERA NEWS: *Madama Butterfly*

NEW YORK CITY 6/8/12

The stage for Chelsea Opera's production of *Madama Butterfly* (seen June 8) was simply the altar of St. Peter's Church on West 20th Street, with the sixteen-piece orchestra arrayed at its base. The set consisted of a screen, a table, a couple of rattan stools and an arrangement of cherry blossoms, big enough to brighten a hospital room. But as soon as conductor Carmine Aufiero launched into the opera's bustling introduction, we were drawn straight into Puccini's Nagasaki, and into a performance in which attention to the work's musical dramaturgy easily compensated for the makeshift surroundings.

The production boasted a strong cast, notably Christina Rohm in the title role. Her Pinkerton was Daniel Rodriguez... there was no question that his voice is the real thing, full of slancio, with secure, ringing high notes that all but overwhelmed the church's nave.

... it was a committed and ultimately moving performance. Modest in scale, the production gave us *Butterfly* in full.
- FRED COHN

THE NEW YORK TIMES: *Glory Denied (A Soldier's Torment in Vietnam and at Home)*

New York City 11/12/10

As composers of contemporary opera go, [Tom] Cipullo has been lucky with "Glory Denied." Excerpts were performed in New York City Opera's VOX series in 2004, and the work has been staged nearly every season since. Now the enterprising Chelsea Opera has taken it up in a spare, affecting production by Lynne Hayden-Findlay that opened on Thursday evening—Veterans Day—at St. Peter's Church in Chelsea.

The older and younger couples interact throughout the score, which is more of an ensemble piece — a succession of duets, trios and quartets — than most operas. Yet the occasional solo turns were the showstoppers, with Older Thompson's frustrated (and mildly comic) listing of the changes in American culture that he confronted in 1973 as the clear centerpiece. Mr. Ramsey rendered it, and the role as a whole, with all the power they demand, and a solid, clear sound.

Ms. Diltz, also a commanding presence, brought a firm, focused tone and emotional depth to the bitter, conflicted arias Mr. Cipullo gave her. Younger Alyce has more innocent, languid music, which Ms. Oberjat sang with velvety smoothness. And Mr. Snook's vocal freshness, tempered with despondency, fully captured Younger Thompson's anguish.

Mr. Cipullo's vocal writing is angular and declamatory at times, but he has a keen sense of when to let that modernist approach melt into glowing melody, and he has an even keener ear for orchestral color. Carmine Aufiero conducted a brisk, driven performance. - ALLAN KOZINN

OPERA NEWS: *Glory Denied*

NEW YORK CITY 11/12/10

On November 12, Chelsea Opera gave Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied* a small-scale, high-impact production at St. Peter's Church in Chelsea. Friday's cast did beautiful work with Cipullo's score — their English diction was especially good — and perhaps even finer work developing their characters. Singers committed to their individual roles with such intensity that, as an ensemble, they embodied the interplay between archetypes and characters, the ideal and the real, with contrapuntal precision. Stage director Lynne Hayden-Findlay masterfully reinforced this interplay through her blocking, which explored shifting configurations of perspectives. Elegant lighting choices

by Michael Megliola, along with Sean Tribble's minimal set design, further helped focus attention on the characters and their interpersonal strife.

In the role of Younger Thompson, the ardent and striking Leubner was particularly well cast. As Younger Alyce, the angelic housewife, Browers imbued a patently one-dimensional role with unflagging vitality, brightness and warmth. Another excellent performance came from Guth, so fiercely committed to Older Alyce's point of view as to make us forgive her actions. As Older Thompson — probably the most dramatically difficult role in the opera — [Jonathan] Kline grew more robust and convincing as the show progressed. ...Kline's rendition was expressionistic, infused with controlled madness, escalating despair and even a little well-timed screaming, so that the aria made perfect emotional sense.

Conductor Carmine Aufiero led the orchestra, whose spirited playing lent energy and texture to the drama, though occasionally it drowned out the singers. Kelly Horsted's sensitive piano-playing exemplified the intimate and searching tone of the production. - ABBY ROSEBROCK

THE NEW YORK TIMES: *Suor Angelica* (After 5 Years, a Tender Work Is Revisited)

NEW YORK CITY 6/5/09

With American opera companies large and small struggling financially and a few going under, there was a patch of encouraging news on Thursday night at St. Peter's Church in Chelsea, the home of the Chelsea Opera. This scrappy company celebrated its fifth anniversary with a production of Puccini's "Suor Angelica."

True, Puccini might not have recognized his orchestration as played here. Given the company's budget constrictions, the orchestra consisted of a piano and a small roster of strings and winds, ably conducted by Carmine Aufiero. Yet the committed cast included gifted singers. The soprano Anya Fidelia made a melancholic and earthy-voiced Angelica. If the production, by the experienced director Beth Greenberg, was bare-bones, the church setting was richly appropriate. The guileless spirituality of Puccini's tender one-act opera, which takes place in an Italian convent, came through. (The main roles are double-cast through this four-performance run.)

Before the performance, sung in Italian without supertitles, the founding co-directors, Lynne Hayden-Findlay and Leonarda Priore, spoke to the audience, which packed the church. In five seasons the Chelsea Opera has presented 10 productions, starting with this staging of "Suor Angelica." So it was a fitting gesture, if also affordable, to return to this beloved Puccini work. - ANTHONY TOMMASINI

THE NEW YORK TIMES: *Pagliacci* (Daniel Rodriguez, New York's 'Singing Cop,' Tries an Opera)

NEW YORK CITY 6/9/06

[Daniel Rodriguez] provided plenty of the full-bodied singing and raw emotion essential to Leoncavallo's late-19th-century Italian style.... filling each phrase with overheated intensity and unleashing full-voiced top notes that shook the rafters of the modest-size church. Maryann Mootos, a bright-voiced soprano, was an appealing Nedda. Ralph Schatzki, an earthy baritone, and Eapen Leubner, a lyric tenor, played the other main members of Canio's troupe, Tonio and Peppe. Stephen Hartley, a hardy baritone, sang Silvio.

The production, directed by Rod Gomez and presented on a makeshift stage at St. Peter's Church in Chelsea, was endearingly homey. The company says it finds costumes by hunting in thrift shops. Yet the eager chorus of more than 20 looked rather poignant, portraying Italian townspeople in their 1940's-style suits and dresses. Carmine Aufiero conducted the orchestra, in an arrangement of the score for 18 instruments, with sweep and energy. The palpable involvement of the entire cast was winning. - ANTHONY TOMMASINI

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Meet the Composer

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- ✓ printing (appeal letters, production and concert programs)
- ✓ costume rental
- ✓ supplies for set, lights and props
- ✓ van and small truck rental

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