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***Chelsea Opera presents... PUCCINI...THE MAN AND HIS MUSIC,
INCLUDING SUOR ANGELICA***

CHELSEA OPERA concludes its 12th season with an evening of Puccini's chamber music and a fully-staged presentation of his most beloved one-act opera, *Suor Angelica*. Performances with the Chelsea Opera Chamber Orchestra, led by Maestro Benjamin Grow, are on **Thursday, June 16** and **Friday, June 17, both at 7:30pm**, at **Christ and St. Stephen's Church**, 120 West 69th Street (between Broadway and Columbus). Stage direction is by Carol Wilson. Tickets: Preferred seats: \$35 in advance/\$45 at the door, General admission: \$30 in advance/\$40 at the door, Seniors/students: \$20 in advance/\$25 at the door, and active military are free. For more information visit www.ChelseaOpera.org tickets, and for tickets, <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/pr/955962>.

The evening begins with two Puccini string quartets, one in *D major* and the more familiar *Crisantemi*. Also on the program is the beautiful *Salve Regina* featuring soprano Samantha Kantak, guest soloist and Daniel Ficarri, guest organist playing the church's glorious [Schoenstein Organ](#), built and installed in 2008. The highlight of the evening will be one of the world's favorite Puccini operas, *Suor Angelica* from *Il Trittico*. Singing the leading role will be up and coming soprano Megan Nielson. Mezzo soprano Leonarda Priore reprises her role of La Zia Principessa and soprano Joanie Brittingham, last seen with Chelsea Opera as Laurie in *The Tender Land*, sings Suor Genovieffa. Filling out smaller roles in the cast are Juliana Curcio as La Suora Zelatrice, Terina Westmeyer as La Badessa, Juli Borst as La Maestra delle Novizie, Jennifer Allenby and Rachel Weishoff as Le Cercatrice, Erin Brittain and Elizabeth Moulton as Le Converse, Alexandra Fees as La Novizia, Mary Katheryn Monday as La Suora Infermiera and Alexander Jorge Grossman as Angelica's son.

The story is familiar. Suor Angelica is forced into a nunnery, having born a son out of wedlock. After 7 years of silence from her family, her aunt arrives and commands her to sign a document that

transfers her inheritance to her younger sister, who is about to be married. Unable to hold back any longer, she desperately begs to know about her son. Her aunt coldly informs her that the child took ill and died two years earlier. No longer interested in remaining in the corporal world, she drinks poison. Seized by remorse, she implores the Virgin to save her. Enveloped in celestial radiance, a child appears and cradles his dying mother, while a choir of nuns and angels sings “Thou Art Saved.”

This production will be directed by Carol Wilson who has performed on the stages of some of the world’s major opera houses and concert halls including Frankfurt, Stockholm, Dresden, Vancouver, Amsterdam, Taipei, Stuttgart, San Francisco, Bonn, Hannover, and Manitoba. She made her international opera debut with Deutsche Oper am Rhein in 1999, and as one of their principal soloists performed over 25 major roles including Eva in *Die Meistersinger*, Kaiserin in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Desdemona in *Otello*, Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*, Alice in *Falstaff*, Contessa in *Capriccio* and *Le nozze di Figaro*, and the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*, a role for which she earned critical acclaim. An Associate Professor of Voice at the University of North Texas, Ms. Wilson has served on the voice faculties at Oberlin College, Vassar College, and Sarah Lawrence College. A graduate of the Yale School of Music with a Doctorate of Musical Arts, Ms. Wilson was awarded their Music Alumni Association Prize.

The evening is under the musical supervision of Chelsea Opera’s recently named music director, Benjamin Grow who came to the company’s attention last summer when he conducted a production of *Glory Denied* in Philadelphia. He was subsequently engaged to serve as assistant conductor on Chelsea Opera’s *Glory Denied* this past November. In July 2015, he won the International Conducting Workshop and Competition in Atlanta, GA. He has participated in masterclasses with Kurt Masur and Larry Rachleff, and assisted conductor Jeffrey Milarsky at the New York Philharmonic last June. He recently assisted conducting Juilliard Professor Jonathan Dawe's new piano concerto at Symphony Space. A dedicated music educator, Mr. Grow was the founding conductor of the 92nd Street Y Youth Orchestra, and currently conducts the chamber orchestra at the School for Strings and Berkshire Summer Music. For several years, Mr. Grow co-presented an annual lecture at the 92nd Street Y, "The Physics of Music," as part of their Mysteries of Science series, and has given pre-concert talks at the Museum of Biblical Art. He received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, and studied with Jeffrey Milarsky at the Manhattan School of Music.

Chelsea Opera is a professional company presenting fully staged operas with chamber orchestra. The company provides a nationally recognized venue for professional singers to advance their careers while making opera affordable and accessible to a broad spectrum of the community. The fine acoustics of the space provide excellent hearing, and its intimacy allows the audience to feel involved in the opera’s story. Of Chelsea Opera’s sustainability, Anthony Tommasini of The New York Times noted in

June 2009: “With American opera companies large and small struggling financially and a few going under, [Chelsea Opera is] a patch of encouraging news...” Following its 60th anniversary production of Aaron Copland’s *The Tender Land* last year, writer Jon Sobel declared that Chelsea Opera “certainly ranks as one of the country’s preeminent ‘small’ opera companies.”

Formed in 2004 by singers Lynne Hayden-Findlay and Leonarda Priore, Chelsea Opera was launched with an all-volunteer production of *Suor Angelica*. Initially, Ms. Priore and Ms. Hayden-Findlay had only intended to produce this one opera. However, artist and audience response was so compelling that they agreed to move forward, incorporating the company and obtaining their IRS non-profit designation in a record eight days.

They have since produced an extensive range of operas including *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (three times), *Pagliacci*, *Don Giovanni*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, *The Scarf*, *The Bear*, the company’s 5th Anniversary production of *Suor Angelica*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *This is the rill speaking/Bermudas*, *The Medium*, and *Madama Butterfly* of which Opera News said, “it was a committed and ultimately moving performance. Modest in scale, the production gave us *Butterfly* in full.” Their November 2010 production of Tom Cipullo’s *Glory Denied* garnered rave reviews from both The New York Times and Opera News, and was revived in November 2015 which was funded, in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts – Art Works program. Other credits include the world premiere of *The Mark of Cain* by Matthew Harris and Terry Quinn, and the Manhattan premiere of *A Distant Love: Songs of John and Abigail Adams* by Gary S. Fagin and Terry Quinn which the company toured to the Adams National Historical Park in June 2015 for a free performance funded by their first grant from the National Endowment for the Arts – Artworks program.

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For further information, visit www.ChelseaOpera.org or write to ChelseaOpera@aol.com.

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