

Marcy Richardson in
Kurt Weill Uncovered
at operamission.
Photo by Cory Weaver



THE NEW YORK FRINGE

There are alternatives to the 'big boys' in New York, some traditional, some innovative, occasionally über-cool but always musical and serious about opera.

Among the biggest and most innovative of New York's smaller groups, straddling the mainstream and the fringe, is **Gotham Chamber Opera**, which presents new and rare work at venues around the city. Founded by artistic director Neal Goren, it aims to give audiences an unusual and intimate experience of opera in imaginative venues (think Haydn's *Il mondo della luna* staged in a planetarium, and you'll get the gist...).

This season marks the company's 10th anniversary with a revival of the opera that launched the new company – Mozart's *Il sogno di Scipione* (scheduled for April 2012). Bringing things right up to date, meanwhile, is the world premiere this November of a specially commissioned work by composer-of-the-moment Nico Muhly: *Dark Sisters* is the story of a woman's struggle with life in a religious cult.

With an unusual focus on Baroque repertoire, **Opera Omnia** performs in a fine, cabaret setting in Greenwich Village. Three years ago they offered a knockout English-language version of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and just followed it up with Cavalli's *Giasone* – its first staged performance in New York. Future

plans are still to be announced.

At the other end of the time-line is **American Opera Projects** and **Opera on Tap**, two groups that also collaborate with one another occasionally in a series called *Opera Grows in Brooklyn*. AOP showcases works that have not been presented anywhere before. Notable among these have been Tarik O'Regan's *Heart of Darkness*, a preview of Stephen Schwartz's *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*, premiered at the New York City Opera, and a one-act monodrama commissioned from Daniel Felsenfeld (with a libretto by Will Eno) called *Nora, in the Great Outdoors*, which is what happens to the heroine of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* immediately after she slams the door. AOP and Opera on Tap have commissioned a full-length touring opera called *The Inner Circle*, based on the life of the famous sexologist, Dr. Kinsey.

Daniel Felsenfeld also curated *Sex, Cigarettes and Psychopaths (A Night of Laughs)* for the outré **Opera Grows** in Brooklyn, an evening of naughty opera and art song. The pub-audiences for these spirited events can meet the artists and composers after the performances.

A group called **operamission**, under director and conductor Jennifer Peterson recently presented – both on site and on the web – a fully orchestrated, unrehearsed, assembled-on-the-spot one-act-per-evening performance of

La bohème with fine, professional singers. Referring to the evening as 'Assembly Required' is a hint at the group's style.

Back on more traditional ground is the **Dicapo Opera Theatre**, operating out of a jewelbox of a 204-seat theatre in a church basement on East 76th Street. A few years ago they offered Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* in its three different editions by the composer, presented over the course of a weekend: the La Scala version on Friday, Brescia on Saturday, and the standard version on Sunday afternoon.

Dicapo alternates standard rep with more adventurous programming; this coming season includes Puccini's *Tosca*, Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*, Frank Loesser's *The Most Happy Fella*, Verdi's *La traviata* and Menotti's *The Consul* (four performances each, sprinkled from October through April).

Over in Chelsea on Manhattan's West Side is the **Chelsea Opera**, with Menotti's *The Medium* (November) and Lee Hoiby's *This is the Rill Speaking* (June) on the roster.

And last – for the moment – but not least, is the **Bronx Opera**, which this season will give Ralph Vaughan Williams' *The Poisoned Kiss* (January) and *Hansel and Gretel* (May). Also wandering minstrels, they perform in both the Bronx and Manhattan. **ON**

Robert Levine