

Federal Period

Opera on the Hill brings passion & old world ambiance to Providence

By: Frank O'Donnell

You're sitting in an outdoor café. A gentle summer breeze ruffles your hair as you sip a bold and refreshing Chianti. You toast your date as a small group of singers performs operatic selections nearby.

You're in Europe, you're thinking. Actually, you're in DePasquale Square, in the heart of Federal Hill, enjoying Opera Providence's presentation of Opera on the Hill.

Opera Providence's Executive Director, Loriana DeCrescenzo, first proposed this series of shows in 2004. Herself a lyric soprano, DeCrescenzo “developed the idea as a means of providing access to opera, taking opera out of the theatre and showcasing our work in a neighborhood park.”



The concept is simple. “Opera is not threatening,” says DeCrescenzo. “Opera is entertaining, enjoyable and inspiring.” And DePasquale Square is the perfect venue. “It creates a festive and inviting European atmosphere celebrating the Italian heritage of its origins and offers excellent choices for dining, relaxing and enjoying time with friends or providing a way to meet new friends. Opera Providence brings together the community and showcases exceptional talent.”

The performers are billed as **“rising stars of the opera world.”**

Names such as Jessica Cooper, Jane Shivick, Anton Belov, Joseph Holmes, Kara Lund, Jeanai Ratcliffé, Ben Davidson, David Kravitz, Emily Marvosh, Patrice Tiedemann, Jason McStoots, and Fredric Scheff.

“They will give the audiences a marvelous array of repertoire that is sure to delight and entertain,” says DeCrescenzo.

There are four shows in the series, each on Sunday afternoons at 5 pm. There is no admission charge.

July 9: All with an Italian Flair! “All popular Italian arias, sweeping melodies,” says DeCrescenzo, “A perfect match for the great Italian food on Federal Hill!”

July 16: Opera is Theatre. “Rapturous and entertaining music from operettas and musical theatre.”

July 23: Comedy Tonight. “The funniest moments in opera.”

July 30: Opera at the Movies. “Opera that has provided inspiration and emotion in movies.”

Gone are the tuxedos and gowns one normally associates with opera.

“Our performers will have festive and stylish summer attire,” promises DeCrescenzo. The men will wear open jackets, the women summer dresses.

According to DeCrescenzo, “People of all ages and demographics attend. They come from all over Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut.”

Last year, attendance averaged about 1,000 per show, to the delight of the local shop owners.

I can't help but wonder if there's any crowd control problem. “There aren't hecklers,” says DeCrescenzo, “and no one has thrown tomatoes.”

For complete information on Opera Providence and Opera on the Hill, check out OP's web site, at www.operaprovidence.org or call **401.331.6060**.