

Berkeley Opera's Mark Streshinsky to Direct LVO's Don Giovanni; Artistic Trio Reunites for October Production

By Heidi Massie

This October, with the opening of the 19th season of the Livermore Valley Opera (LVO), audiences of the growing regional opera company will have the opportunity to experience a contemporary interpretation of the classic Mozart opera, *Don Giovanni*, as realized by noted Stage Director, Mark Streshinsky.

Streshinsky was recently named Artistic Director of Berkeley Opera. He has directed five productions for the company, most recently the roots of this production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which he now will expand for LVO.

"The production for Livermore Valley Opera will be even more realized in creating an environment to set this masterwork," said Streshinsky. "LVO has resources in place that Berkeley Opera is only beginning to acquire. This opera company has established scenic and costume artists and a dedicated budget to support a full production. Those are just two of the many resources it has at its disposal. Berkeley Opera's last season was one with a drastically reduced budget and a new and unknown theater. All these points are moot at LVO."

LVO has produced several operas over the past three seasons since the Bankhead Theater opened. The theater has since earned itself a reputation as a state-



Pictured are (left) Eugene Brancoveanu; (center) Alex Katzman; and (right) Mark Streshinsky.

of-the-art venue that offers audiences an intimate opera experience. LVO's production experience at the Bankhead, coupled with the 100 or so dedicated LVO volunteers who work to bring professional-quality operas to the theater, will aid Streshinsky in realizing his vision of *Don Giovanni*.

LVO's Executive Director Sara Nealy explains why the opera company is venturing into new territory with Streshinsky's production. "It's important for LVO to stretch creatively, to expose our audiences to diverse artistic visions. We believe that Streshinsky's contemporary interpretation of *Don Giovanni* will help to engage

new and younger audiences by making connections with them that are relevant."

"For anyone concerned about how true to Mozart's original this contemporary interpretation will be, just look to the reviews of Berkeley Opera's production," adds Nealy. According to *San Francisco Classical Voice*, "...the marvelous music, his [Mozart's] wit, and his basic humanity are scrupulously preserved in this performance." The *Contra Costa Times* review of Streshinsky's *Don Giovanni* said, "The production's

utter faithfulness to the music, coupled with a dazzling creativity in interpreting the psychology and spirit of the opera, merit high praise."

The October production of *Don*

Giovanni will reunite the experienced opera trio of Streshinsky, LVO Music Director and Conductor, Alexander Katsman, and formidable rising star, baritone Eugene Brancoveanu, known to LVO audiences as Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* (March, 2009) and who the *San Francisco Chronicle* calls "extravagantly gifted." Earlier this year, this trio worked together for Berkeley Opera's *Don Giovanni*.

"Working together is like being with family," says Katsman. "You know what makes them click and how to draw out their most creative energy. This gives us the opportunity to find new colors and facets to the ideas that began in the first production."

Don Giovanni will be performed October 2, 3, 9, and 10 at the Bankhead Theater, 2400 First Street, Livermore. Tickets are available at the following site www.livermoreperformingarts.org. More information can be found at www.livermorevalleyopera.org