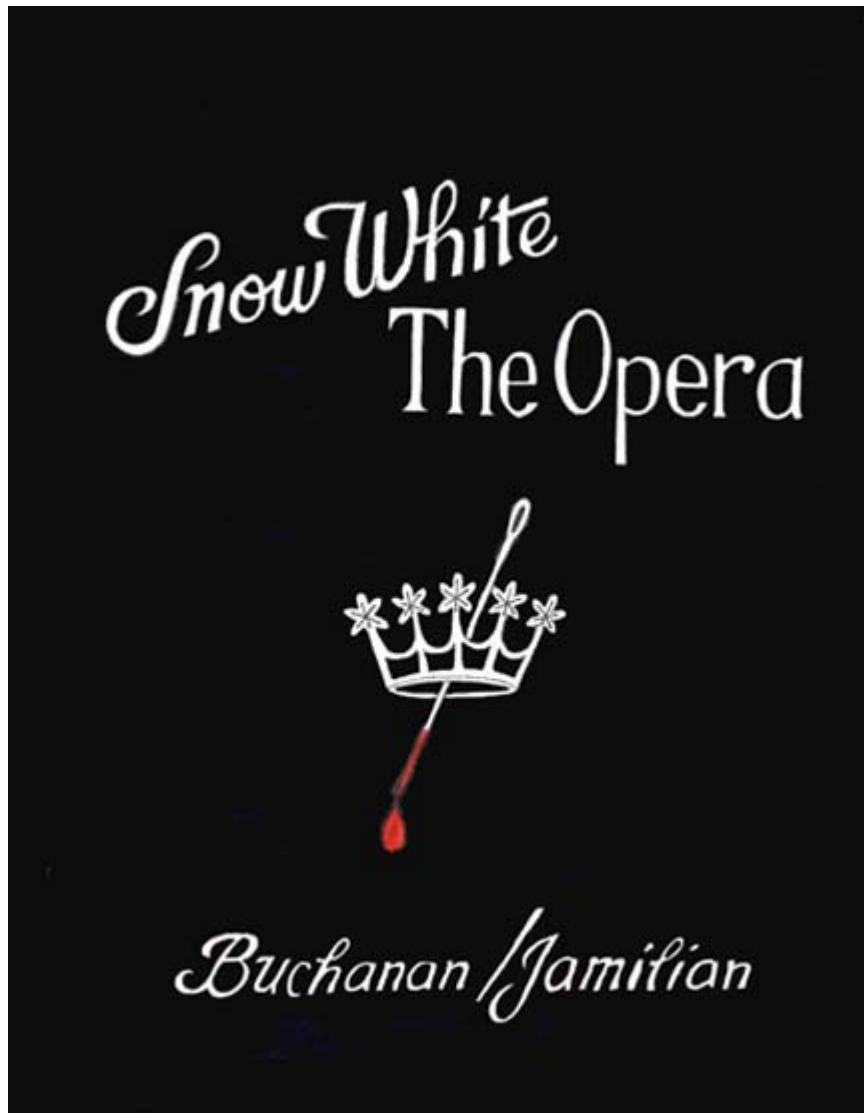


Upcoming in Reno: Snow White: The Opera



Snow White: The Opera ***For Young People of ALL Ages***

During the 1991–1992 school year, the Reverend Gary Buchanan,

working with students at Jamilian Parochial School, composed a full, three-act opera as part of the school's music curriculum: *Snow White: The Opera*, sub-titled *For Young People of All Ages*.

On Saturday evening, November 8, 2014, two scenes from that opera will be presented with the Reno Pops Orchestra conducted by Jane Brown. The concert will be at 7:00 p.m. at Nightingale Concert Hall, the University of Nevada, Reno. The soloists will be local Nevada Opera talents Steven Meyers (as the Huntsman) and Jennifer Probst Gourley (as the evil Queen of Fall). The concert, titled "Scoundrels, Villains & Knaves" is free to the public. (For more information, go to: www.renopops.org)

Following this concert, a full concert premiere of the work with orchestra, soloists, and chorus is anticipated for the spring of 2015 in Reno, depending on whether sufficient grants, donations, and other funding via New Music U.S.A. is received.

Snow White: The Opera is based directly on the Brothers Grimm version. As part of the parochial school project students from middle and high school reset the original story line in iambic meter to serve as a libretto. During each class students submitted melodic settings for the key arias and scenes. Those melodies were reviewed, sung, and voted on by the class. Many melodies were combined, modified, and improved upon and serve as leitmotifs for all other music composed by Rev. Buchanan in the score, such as the overture, scene preludes and changes, action sequences, transitions, and the like.

Each week Rev. Buchanan would sit at the piano and while teaching music theory and songwriting, "adjust" rhythms, harmonize the songs, compose additional materials, and lead the students in adapting the libretto, singing, and further developing the operatic and dramatic concepts needed. By the end of that school year an entire opera had been completed and

was performed in class by the students accompanied by synthesized backgrounds. The new, full score for singers and orchestra was completed in 2014.

The model used for the opera was Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and students viewed and studied the 1975 Ingmar Bergman film of that opera's Swedish production. The music of *Snow White* is clear and innocent singspiel, or "ur-song," of young people in the Community of Light (Cosolargy International) and combines all major operatic styles, such as Ars Nova, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Impressionistic, Modern and Neo-Classical. Each scene is quite singable, memorable, and dramatically evocative—much in the style of Rev. Buchanan's former teachers, opera composers all: Vittorio Giannini, Louis Mennini, Robert Ward, and William Bergsma. The work is highly "archetypal," in the Jungian sense, and is not at all maudlin. Following is a précis of the opera's story line and action:

Act I

Complete with a Narrator introducing many scenes, the story line begins with the King (Baritone) and Queen (Mezzo-Soprano) of Snow announcing to the People of the Shire (Chorus) a royal birth—that of Snow White.

Following the birth of Snow White (Lyric Soprano) the Queen of Snow dies. Several years later, the People of the Shire (Women's Chorus) demand that the King remarry—which he does; this time to the vain and deceitful Queen of Fall (Contralto). Following the marriage, the King also dies by poisoning, leaving Snow White an orphan in the care of the evil Queen.

Immediately, the Queen of Fall is informed by her Magic Mirror on the Wall (Basso) that the fairest beauty in the Kingdom of Snow belongs, not to her, but to the innocent child, Snow White. Infuriated, the Queen calls upon her Huntsman (Baritone) to take the Princess into the wood, kill her, and bring back the girl's heart to the Queen as proof of the deed.

In the wood the Huntsman finds that he cannot bring himself to kill Snow White and tells her to run away into the dark forest. Following her departure the Huntsman is at a loss as to what to do: The Queen expects him to return with Snow White's heart! Suddenly, a wild boar runs out of the forest in the direction of Snow White's departure. The Huntsman rushes to throw himself upon the boar, cuts out its heart with his dagger, and sings that he now has a substitute heart to present to the evil Queen of Fall. Upon his return to the court he presents the heart to the Queen—and she eats it!

However, the Magic Mirror sings once again that Snow White is still the fairest in the land, revealing to the Queen that she was not killed after all but ran away into the forest. Once again the Queen goes into a rage. She calls for The Huntsman, questions him, mocks—and then stabs—him.

The end of Act I has Snow White in the dark forest singing her first aria, "I Am So Alone," after which the curtain closes.

Act II

Snow White approaches a cottage in the forest—that of the Seven Dwarves (Seven-Voice Boys' Choir). She enters to find the table set for the Dwarves' dinner. She eats from each of their dishes of food, then tries out each of their beds for comfort, falling asleep on the seventh. Soon, the Dwarves return home from their hard day of work in the mine and discover Snow White asleep.

Significantly, each of the Dwarves wears one of the colors of the rainbow, and each has a name associated with the solfeggio tones of the musical scale. Douglas is "DO" = Red; Raymond is "RE" = Orange; Michael is "MI" = Yellow; Vaughan is "FA" = Green; Saul is "SOL" = Blue; Lawrence is "LA" = Indigo; and, Tyrol is "TI" = Violet. When each of the characters sings, he does so in the proper key: C, D, E, F, G, A, or B. The overall

archetype presented is that the Dwarves represent the seven color Force Centers (Chakras) of the higher body fields, with Snow White as the "Crown" Center, which is the color White.

Snow White relates her history and circumstances with the evil Queen of Fall to the Dwarves, and they pledge to take care of the child and protect her.

The following scenes have the Queen conversing with her Mirror, assuming various disguises, and visiting Snow White at the cottage and making three attempts to kill her. Her first and second attempts fail, as the Dwarves are later able to revive Snow White; however, on the third visit the Queen has Snow White eat a poisoned apple, and the young girl succumbs to a deep, dark, death-like sleep.

Act II ends as the Dwarves return to discover Snow White's crumpled form on the floor. They sing a lament as the curtain falls.

Act III

The curtain rises on Snow White lying in a crystal coffin on a hilltop while the Dwarves sit close by, weeping.

Then enters the Prince of Spring (Heroic Tenor) with his courtiers. He sings, asking who is this beauty in the coffin, and why are these little men weeping? The Dwarves answer him in detail concerning her passing at the hand of the evil Queen of Fall, and this is cause of their weeping. The scene turns into a highly dramatic "duet" between the Prince and the Dwarves.

Next the Prince tells the Dwarves that he is concerned that Snow White's beauty may suffer with the onset of winter and that he would like to remove her to his Kingdom of Spring for safeguarding. The Dwarves, recognizing his sincerity and proper intentions, grant his request, and he takes her to his kingdom to preserve her body there.

The courtiers assist the Prince in removing the lid of the coffin wherein lies the beautiful Snow White. As he leans forward to lift the body, the Prince bestows a light kiss upon her cheek—causing Snow White to awaken!

He identifies himself, and Snow White is overjoyed to recognize him as the Prince she had dreamed of and sung about in her Act II aria, “The Land of Spring.” She takes the hand of the Prince, steps from the coffin, and the two perform a love duet in which the Prince asks for her hand in marriage. Snow White accepts his proposal, and the scene ends with a song of farewell by Snow White to the Dwarves.

The last scene of Act III is the royal wedding, taking place in the Kingdom of Spring. Assembled are the Minister, People of the Shire, the Prince of Spring, Snow White, Courtiers, and the Dwarves. The music bespeaks a royal—perhaps even “divine”—marriage. All are singing joyfully.

Then, from out of the dark emerges the Queen of Fall with a dagger in her hand. She makes her way across the stage toward Snow White and lunges at her. Observing the commotion, the Prince steps in front of Snow White, deflecting the dagger, so that the evil Queen stabs herself! As she falls to the ground, the Queen sings her song of death and admits that Snow White is, indeed, “the fairest of us all.”

The courtiers carry the Queen from the stage as the Chorus, Dwarves, and Prince sing a final joyful anthem—a “good night” to the audience—in rich trochaic meter and contrapuntal style. And the final curtain falls.

Once funds have been acquired to mount the spring 2015 premiere of the full opera, it is envisioned that a great many young people in the northern Nevada area, their parents and extended families, may wish to attend the performance. The fairytale is widely known and quite appealing, in its original form (due to its archetypal nature), to multiple cultures.

The fundamental archetypes of the opera should be recognized by most consociates of Cosolargy; for example, the higher symbology is of the sun's journey through the seasons, Light and Darkness, the enlivening of the higher-dimensional Force Centers, the transition from Darkness of Ignorance to Christ Consciousness, and eventual return to the Worlds of Light as a fully restored Being of Light. All students participating in the opera project at Jamilian Parochial School in 1991–1992 were aware of these symbols and metaphorical allusions as they contributed their higher perceptions and inspired creativity to the drama.

Those wishing to support or who may be interested in attending a performance in the spring of 2015 should contact Rev. Buchanan at **gbuchanan@communityofchrist.org**.

The Reno Pops Orchestra is a wholly volunteer orchestra (www.renopops.org) supported by its member musicians, community foundations and supporters, the Nevada Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

–contributed by Gary Buchanan