

Southfield opera star sparks college singers

By MARILYN FRUMKIN

There's no stage curtain in Marygrove College's theater. The auditorium is small. When opera workshop students perform there, they sing to competent but lonely piano accompaniment. It doesn't matter. What does matter is that they have Emilia Cundari, internationally known soprano, as their mentor and guiding light.

Miss Cundari, of Southfield, began the opera workshop three years ago with the help of her husband, bass Sergio Pessetti, and five or six Marygrove-U of D music students.

Today there are more than 40 in the group.

This season's production, Engelbert Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel," has played to more than 3,000 people. Audiences have been enthusiastic.

THE CAST, while not possessed of great voices, show the results of their vocal training in almost professional performances.

"I aim for perfection and hope to instill a respect for the music," Miss Cundari said.

"I want the students to be completely faithful to the composer and the score. Then, when they go out into the opera world, there will be no shock — they will be ready."

They weren't quite ready for the fortune-telling card scene from Blase's "Carmen" that preceded the children's opera. The score was a bit too demanding for voices still in training. But "Hansel and Gretel" was a perfect foil for their fresh voices and vitality.

A future candidate for professional comic opera roles is Virginia Winters, whose girly, animated face and rich, confident voice made her role of the wicked witch a highlight of the opera.

EMILIA CUNDARI is proud of her students and believes they all have potential. "There's a horn at the top for everyone. It depends on how much they are willing to work toward their goals."

Miss Cundari, a native Detroit, made it to the top. She won a Detroit Scholarship while attending Marygrove, then studied in New York.

There she joined the City Center Opera Company and later signed with Rudolph Bing of the Metropolitan.

Besides her Meisner roles, she has performed in Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and England. She has been Mimi in "La Boheme," Semele in "Marriage of Figaro" and Micaela in "Carmen."

She has sung at the San Carlo, Bellini and Florence opera houses and at La Scala in Milan, where she and Sergio maintain an apartment.

Sergio met Emilia in Naples when they performed together in a radio performance of a Rossini opera.

"HE LATER told me that he looked at me and decided 'This is the girl I'm going to marry,'" she said.

Pessetti also has performed all over Europe. He made his debut as a guest star with the New York Met four years ago.

Some students study both at Marygrove with Cundari and privately with Pessetti. "There's the background," Miss Cundari said. "He's really strict. He shouts more. I don't usually raise my voice — but when I do..."

The couple chose a more relaxed, middle-class life when they decided to raise a family. Francesco is now four years old and enjoys visiting his grandparents, who live nearby. The family lives in a typically American Cape Cod house on Westland Avenue.

But I have been disappointed to some extent," Miss Cundari said. "I love classical. I developed European tastes in furniture, clothing and jewelry."

Recalling her active career, she said, "It was a hard life. Now I'm letting go a little relaxing more, even smoking occasionally."

Pupils win ribbons at their science fair

FARMINGTON HILLS—Ten sixth grade students from St. Fabian's School won ribbons in their science fair held May 6.

First prize winner from Room 100 was Richard Roth for his study of the effects of mouthwash on bacteria.

Other Room 100 winners were Kerri Brown—second prize for "Tobacco and Your Health," Carol Langdon—third prize for her model eye, Anne Marie Horvath—fourth place for "Nitrogen Cycle." Michele Clark won fifth for her study on the function of the ear.

John LaBelle won first place from Room 101 for his project on cameras. Carol Oswald took second for her "Artificial ear." Bob Shand won third for his comparison of weight versus strength. Ammirick Faden won fourth for a report on bean plants in different soils; and James Ganser took fifth for his work on the effect of distilled water on plants.

6 awarded highest Masonry degree

FARMINGTON—Six Farmington residents were among 30 Master Masons who received the Scottish Rite Freemasonry's 32nd degree at the Masonic Temple in Detroit.

Named were Kevork G. Gaddian, Harold W. Waack, Richard B. Morgan Jr., Henry J. Geha, Gary G. Geha and Joseph W. Dell.

Speaker at the traditional 32nd degree banquet was U.S. Sen. Robert P. Griffin.

WSHJ-88.3

Tuesday
12:30 p.m.—A la Carte: Lady Rich brings housewives helpful hints.
6:30 p.m.—Entertainment 75: Mike Dennis reviews current movies playing in the area.
8:35 p.m.—On the Spot: A talk show with your host Tim Abelsa.

Wednesday
12:30 p.m.—A la Carte
6:35 p.m.—Community News: Franklin Barnes gives you an update on the latest happenings in Southfield.
8:30 p.m.—School Board Highlights: Chuck Tyrrell brings you the highlights of this week's school board meeting.

Thursday
12:30 p.m.—A la Carte
6:30 p.m.—Entertainment 75
8:30 p.m.—School Board Highlights: Chuck Tyrrell brings you the highlights of this week's school board meeting.

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