UMD School of Music, Maryland Opera Studio Presents:

NEW WORKS READING SERIES

A FAMILY REUNION

Friday, February 20, 2015 . 7:30PM
Joseph & Alma Gildenhorn Recital Hall

A FAMILY REUNION
Music by Chris Patton
Additional music by George Fulginiti-Shakar
Story and Lyrics by William Moses

Musical Director: Justina Lee
Stage Director: Nick Olcott
Music Editing: William Evans & Bradley Green

The use of Chris Patton’s music is endorsed by his wife, Vivienne.

Cast

ALMA Nicole Levesque
RUTH Chelsea Davidson
OLLIE JR. Anthony Duke Eversole
JASON Ava Wing
URSULA Laynee Dell Woodward

MILO Alec Feiss
AL Daren Jackson
ELIZABETH Louisa Waycott
OLLIE SR. Matthew Hill

Setting

TIME Modern Day
PLACE The home of Alma and Ollie Sr.

This performance will last approximately two hours with a 15-minute intermission.

Video or audio recording of the production is strictly prohibited.
Director’s Note: A Happy Reunion for the Maryland Opera Studio

A Happy Reunion for the Maryland Opera Studio. We've been given the unique opportunity to revisit a piece we helped bring to life more than 20 years ago. It feels a little like a college graduation party for a godchild whose birth we attended. A happy reunion indeed.

And the family part? Well, this piece has deep ties to the University of Maryland: composer Chris Patton studied here in the doctoral composition program and was one of the earliest developers of the electronic music studio that now flourishes in the School of Music.

We might seem to be breaking our own rules for the News Works Reading Series. Previous offerings have been pieces that had never received public performance. A Happy Reunion, in contrast, has. Despite the composer’s tragic early death, his artistic collaborator, William Moses, was able to move the piece forward to a much-lauded professional premiere at DC’s In Series.

But Bill doesn’t consider it finished. He is still looking to shape the piece with an eye toward it finding the wider audience it so richly deserves. We at the Maryland Opera Studio are proud to be a part of the ongoing journey of A Happy Reunion.

— Nick Olcott, stage director

The Road to A Family Reunion

The road to A Family Reunion started out simply. In 1992, composer Chris Patton and I had just finished our fourth full-length music-theatre work, The Bridge, which was performed in the Terrace Theatre at The Kennedy Center. I decided to develop a story and write a libretto based on family reunions, gatherings that became familiar to me through my wife’s family’s biennial events. Characters became clear. Scenes emerged: segments were performed at the Hand Chapel as part of Carla Hubner’s In Series; Signature Theatre selected Reunion as part of its Early Stages Project; and the Maryland Opera Studio performed a concert version of Act I with full orchestra.

Work schedules for Chris and me intensified and progress slowed. I became a university dean while Chris began a PhD program in composition. Chris worked on refining orchestration for Act I as I completed the libretto for Act II. Then in the spring of 2006, Chris died suddenly after a brief illness. It seemed that the road to A Family Reunion had ended.

Last spring I decided to take new steps on the road hoping that it would lead somewhere. Chris’ wife, Vivienne, gave me access to his music library. University of Maryland professor Bill Evans and I assembled the score. Local composer and musical director George Fulginiti-Shakar composed music for scenes where the original orchestration could not be found. And life was finally breathed into the project when Carla Hubner agreed to produce the premiere of A Family Reunion at the In Series.

Now the road has brought A Family Reunion back to the Maryland Opera Studio and the University of Maryland. We hope you will enjoy the work as much as we have enjoyed the journey.

— William Moses, librettist
Chris Patton, composer, composed choral music, operas, jazz scores, electronic music and incidental music for theatre. His works have been performed at The Kennedy Center, Washington National Cathedral, Folger Theatre, the University of Maryland and local high schools. He graduated from Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont, and played jazz saxophone during the 1970s. In 1978, Dr. Patton received a master’s degree in liberal studies, with a concentration on improvisational music, from Wesleyan University. He received his doctorate in composition from the University of Maryland in 2002.

Patton’s work with librettist William Moses spanned from 1982 to his death in 2006. Together they composed five full-length works and several performance pieces. Mary Gardner, president of Community Concerts of Olney, said about their partnership: “As their collaboration deepened, so also were composer and librettist becoming bolder in using simple direct language to convey ideas, letting the music convey the emotional content of those ideas. Life experience, too, and everything in the environment — sounds, images, interactions, secret places of the heart — could become part of the story and musical noise.”

Prior to Patton’s death in 2006, he was managing director of the 21st Century Consort, a group dedicated to performing new music. The Consort performed “Out of Darkness” at the Washington Cathedral.

George Fulginiti-Shakar, composer & arranger, is one of the area’s most respected music directors, conductors, pianists and teachers. He was the Assistant Music Director for Merrily We Roll Along at Arena Stage, and went on to music direct a host of award-nominated musicals at Arena, including Oklahoma and Cabaret, where he earned the Helen Hayes Award. He also received award nominations for such musicals as Damn Yankees, Camelot, South Pacific (Arena Stage), and The Oedipus Plays, Comedy of Errors, Boys from Syracuse and Two Gentlemen of Verona (The Shakespeare Theatre). Fulginiti-Shakar has worked at all the major theatres in DC, and regionally in New York, Boston, Juneau and Baltimore.

Fulginiti-Shakar teaches at the Theatre Lab, the Studio Conservatory and maintains a private studio as well. He has presented masterclasses at American University, George Washington University and Catholic University. He is Chair of the Board of the DC Cabaret Network and is a founding member of the Alliance for New Music-Theatre.

William Moses, librettist, is a playwright, librettist and lyricist who also has an extensive resume as a theatre director and designer. As a founding member of the Alliance for New Music-Theatre, Moses relishes the collaborative process that from the onset brings together vocalists, composers and writers to develop new work. A Family Reunion is the fifth full-length work that Moses created with composer Chris Patton. Earlier works include The Kid, Telling Stories, Fidgety Phil and The Bridge. Moses’ music-theatre works have been performed at The Kennedy Center, DeafWest Theatre (Los Angeles), the Ruth Eckerd Center (Clearwater, FL), Signature Theatre, The Hand Chapel at Mount Vernon, Woolly Mammoth Theatre and Theatre David-Brno (Slovakia).

Moses also has written lyrics for several performance pieces: Vox Papa, Canticle of the Virgin and Blonde Boy, music by Chris Patton; Journey, music by George Fulginiti-Shakar; Moving, music by jazz composer Charles White; and Lunch Break, music by Deborah Wickes-LaPuma. His play, Am I Paranoid, received rave reviews resulting in an extended run in Los Angeles.

Nick Olcott, director, serves as Director of Acting for the Maryland Opera Studio. His MOS credits include Die Fledermaus, Die Zauberflöte, Amelia al Ballo, Die Entführung aus dem Serail, L’elisir d’amore, Le nozze di Figaro, Serse, The Turn of the Screw and Così fan tutte. He is a frequent coach and stage director for the Washington National
Opera Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. Professional opera credits include Wolf Trap Opera, Opera Cleveland, Boston Lyric Opera, the In Series, Pine Mountain Music Festival and Ash Lawn Opera Festival. Theatre credits include Arena Stage, the Philadelphia Theatre Company, Theater J and Round House Theatre. He directs frequently for Opera Lafayette, most recently their pairing of Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* (performed in French) with Philidor’s *Les femmes vengées*, which played at The Kennedy Center in Washington, Lincoln Center in New York and the Opéra Royal in Versailles. His production of the reggae musical Bob Marley’s *Three Little Birds* recently ran off-Broadway at the New Victory Theater in New York. Upcoming projects include *L’épreuve villageoise* for Opera Lafayette and the world premiere of *Garfield, the Musical with Cattitude* at Adventure Theatre/Musical Theater Center.

**Justina Lee**, studio principal coach, joined the faculty of the University of Maryland, College Park in 2008 as Music Director of the graduate Maryland Opera Studio. She has worked as an assistant conductor, pianist and coach for the Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, the Glimmerglass Festival, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, the Wolf Trap Opera Company, the Castleton Festival, the CoOperative Program at Rider University and Centro Studi Italiani in Urbania, Italy. Lee received a Master of Music in accompanying from the Manhattan School of Music as well as a Master of Music in piano performance from the University of California, Los Angeles. Concert performances include recitals with tenor Lawrence Brownlee as well as residencies with the Marilyn Horne Foundation and Lorin Maazel’s Châteauville Foundation.

**Chelsea Davidson** (Chattanooga, TN), *Ruth, soprano*, has performed Eliza Doolittle/*My Fair Lady*, Rhoda/*White Christmas*, Susanna/*Le nozze di Figaro*, Lucy/*The Telephone* and Donna Elvira/*Don Giovanni*. She made her professional recital debut in the Summit Pianos Concert Series and presented music of American composers. She has placed first for the National Association of Teachers of Singing’s Regional Auditions two years consecutively and placed second in her division for the National Finals. She placed in finals for the Pro-Mozart Society of Atlanta Scholarship Competition and the National Jenny Lind Competition. She holds a BM in vocal performance from Lee University and is currently a first-year member of The Maryland Opera Studio in Carmen Balthrop’s studio.

**Anthony Duke Eversole** (Bountiful, UT), *Ollie Jr., baritone*, was most recently seen singing the role of Sharpless in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* at the Castleton Festival. He was a featured soloist in the Brahms German Requiem, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, Mendelssohn’s *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* and Haydn’s *Nicolaimesse*. Other roles include Papageno/*Die Zaubерflöte*, Vidal Hernandez/*Luisa Fernanda*, Plunkett/Martha, Belcore/*L’elisir d’amore*, Top/*The Tender Land* and Falstaff/*Falstaff*. Eversole holds a MM in voice from the University of Oklahoma as well as dual BM degrees from Utah State University in voice performance and choral music education. Eversole is a doctoral candidate and a first-year member of the Maryland Opera Studio in Dominic Cossa’s studio.

**Alec Feiss** (Akron, OH), *Milo, tenor*, In 2013, Feiss attended the Castleton Festival as member of their training program: CATS. In 2012, Feiss performed First Armored Man, the Second Priest and Monostatos/*Die Zauberflöte* (Astoria Music Festival). Feiss received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 2012, where he studied with Julien Robbins. He is currently a first-year member of the Maryland Opera Studio in Gran Wilson’s studio.

**Matthew Hill** (Laurel, MD), *Ollie Sr., tenor*, received his BM in vocal performance from UMD. Recent roles include Mark Cohen/*Rent*, Matt/*The Fantasticks*, Damon/*Acis and Galatea* and Taminno/*Die Zauberglōtē*. Hill sings weekly at the church
of the Presidents, St. John’s Episcopal Church, Lafayette Square, and also performs as a chorister and soloist with the Washington Master Chorale, the Washington Bach Consort and the Santa Fe Desert Chorale. This summer, Hill will be joining Opera Saratoga as a young artist performing in La Cenerentola and Dido and Aeneas. Hill is currently a first-year member of the Maryland Opera Studio in Gran Wilson’s studio.

Daren Jackson (Wilmington, NC), Al, bass, attended the University of North Carolina School of the Arts where he performed in Turandot, Maria Stuarda and Lélisir d’amore. At the 2014 Southeast Regional Finals of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Jackson was awarded the Peg Gary Encouragement Award and the Atlanta Opera Guild Encouragement Award. After winning the Mondavi Young Artists Competition, he was cast as the title character in an original opera called The Magic Fish, a child-oriented opera based on a tale by the Brothers Grimm. He is currently a first-year member of the Maryland Opera Studio in Dominic Cossa’s studio.

Nicole Levesque (Stamford, CT), Alma, mezzo-soprano, was most recently seen as Nancy in Oberlin Opera Theater’s production of Benjamin Britten’s Albert Herring. Levesque’s credits with Oberlin Opera Theater include Hänsel/Hänsel und Gretel, Prince Orlofsky/Die Fledermaus, Ernesto/Il mondo della luna, Dame Doleful/Too Many Sopranos, and La libellule and La tasse chinoise/L’enfant et les sortilèges. Levesque has also appeared in the Oberlin Opera Theater’s scenes program performing Charlotte/Werther, Desdemona/Otello and Der Komponist/Ariadne auf Naxos. She holds a BA in comparative literature and a BM in classical vocal performance from Oberlin where she studied with Lorraine Manz. Levesque is currently a first-year member of the Maryland Opera Studio in Delores Ziegler’s studio.

Louisa Waycott (Ketchum, ID), Elizabeth, mezzo-soprano, has performed with Opera in the Ozarks, the International Lyric Academy, the American Institute of Musical Studies, the Neil Semer Vocal Institute and Songfest where she collaborated with contemporary composers such as Jake Heggie, John Musto and Libby Larson. Previous roles have included Martha/Iolanta, Meg/Falstaff, la zia/Madama Butterfly, Despina/ Cosi fan tutte, Lady Saphir/Patience, Kate and Edith/Pirates of Penzance, Tessa/The Gondoliers, Mercedes/Carmen, Estrella/La Perichole and La Ciesca/Gianni Schicchi. She graduated from the University of Mississippi and is currently a first-year member of the Maryland Opera Studio in Martha Randall’s studio.

Ava Wing (Saratoga Springs, NY), Jason, soprano, made her New York City debut in the roles of Blonde and Erna in the American premiere of All Quiet on the Western Front with the Metro Chamber Orchestra. She made her operatic debut as Gretel in Hänsel und Gretel at Purchase College where she also sang the roles of Tytania/A Midsummer Night’s Dream and Rosalinda/Die Fledermaus. She has also appeared in the chorus of Amahl and the Night Visitors, Les Mamelles de Tirésias and Cendrillon. She graduated from Purchase College with her BM in vocal performance and is currently a first-year member of the Maryland Opera Studio in Linda Mabbs’ studio.

Laynee Dell Woodward (Minden, NE), Ursula, soprano, received her BM in vocal performance from Nebraska Wesleyan University, where she performed the title role in Léo Delibes’ Lakmé under the baton of Maestro William Wyman. Roles include Mrs. Nolan/The Medium, The Queen of the Night/The Magic Flute and Sofia/Il Signor Bruschino (Wesleyan Opera) and Olympia/Les contes d’Hoffmann (Harrower Opera Program). As a concert soloist, Woodward has performed the Mozart concert aria “No che non sei capace” with the Lincoln Civic Orchestra, as well as “Les oiseaux dans la charmille” from Offenbach’s Les contes d’Hoffmann with Orchestra Omaha. Woodward is currently a first-year member of the Maryland Opera Studio in Linda Mabbs’ studio.
Thanks to the support of the School of Music and The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the Maryland Opera Studio has been able to make the exploration of new operas a central part of our mission. Over the past ten years, we have offered a dozen readings of new works, as well as full productions of three commissioned operas (Frank Proto/John Chenault’s *Shadowboxer*, John Musto/Mark Campbell’s *Later the Same Evening* and Robert Convery/Kathleen Cahill’s *Clara*). We are deeply indebted to the school and The Clarice for making this possible.

We have a responsibility in our Opera Studio and training program to prepare our singers to master the standard repertoire. But we also have an obligation to offer our students opportunities to study the contemporary repertoire, to participate in the creating of a new opera and to explore the musical language that our composers are using now.

We must never ignore the contemporary and modern repertoire or the emerging young composers. Having live composers and librettists present, of course, gives the singers the opportunity to work with living creators and so understand how the operas are constructed. Such insights can only enhance their understanding of the classical repertoire.

— Leon Major,
*Founder of the Maryland Opera Studio*