

CARL J. RATNER • Stage Director

Representation: **OVATION! Management**

Blanche Artis Lewis

6161 N. Hamilton • Chicago, IL 60659-4220 • 773-338-4182

RESUME

Carl J. Ratner's career includes over two decades of experience as an opera director. He learned his craft assisting directors at major opera houses including Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, Munich Opera, San Francisco Opera, English National Opera, New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, and the Spoleto Festival in Italy, where he worked with eminent composer Gian Carlo Menotti.

He is the recipient of a 2010-2011 Fulbright lecture-research grant to the Russian Federation; he will direct Menotti's opera *The Old Maid and the Thief*, lecture on American art song, lead master classes and appear in recital at the St. Petersburg Conservatory of Music.

In 2010, he returned to Opera Naples to direct *The Magic Flute*, conducted by Lucy Arner of the Metropolitan Opera. He has previously directed *Rigoletto*, *Madama Butterfly*, *L'enfant prodigue*, and *Amahl and the Night Visitors* for the company.

In 2009, he served as resident opera director for the Bay View Music Festival, staging a critically acclaimed production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. His much-admired staging of *Madama Butterfly* has been presented by Cedar Rapids Opera Opera Theatre, the Battle Creek Symphony, Opera at the Acorn in Three Oaks Michigan, and Bellissima Opera as well as Opera Naples.

Other recent productions include *The Marriage of Figaro* and *La Bohème* for Cedar Rapids Opera Theater and *Susannah* for Dupage Opera Theater. Of his staging of *Susannah*, the local critic wrote, "The production's dramatic power owes itself to Carl Ratner's decisive stage direction which never wavers in getting directly to the point....The stage direction becomes a tool to evoke the richly textured life of a town brimming with activity."

From 1994 to 1999 Ratner served as Artistic Director of Chicago Opera Theater, staging numerous productions for the company including *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *The Grand Duchess of Gérolstein*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, *Bon Appétit*, and Michael Ching's brilliant sequel to *Gianni Schicchi*, *Buoso's Ghost*. William Shackelford, critic for the international magazine *Opera*, called his direction of *The Tales of Hoffmann* "flawless" and stated that his staging of *The Italian Girl in Algiers* "revealed a genius for comic timing.... Rossini would have approved."

From 1984 to 1993, he was Artistic Director of Chamber Opera Chicago, staging many repertory staples by Mozart, Verdi and Puccini, as well as more unusual fare such as Haydn's *World of the Moon*, Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*, and Lawrence Rapchak's *The Lifework of Juan Diaz*, for which Ratner adapted the libretto from the short story and teleplay by Ray Bardbury. Of his staging for the company of *Così fan tutte*, the critic for *Opera Monthly* magazine wrote, "I left with a feeling of exultation....[This production] renews [one's] faith in the vitality and immortal relevance of opera for the modern world."

He currently serves as Director of Opera and Associate Professor of Voice for the School of Music at Western Michigan University, where he directs the annual opera production and teaches applied

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voice, opera workshop, vocal literature, and French and German diction. He received his Bachelor of Music degree in music history from the Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio and also participated in an internship in opera, dance, and drama production at The Juilliard School in New York City. He earned a Master of Arts in vocal pedagogy at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago and his Doctor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the School of Music at Northwestern University.

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RESUME

Current Positions

Opera Naples (Florida)
Western Michigan University

Artistic and Management Consultant, 2005-present.
Director of Opera, 2001-present

Positions Held

Bay View Music Festival
Chicago Opera Theater
Metropolitan Opera
San Francisco Opera
Chamber Opera Chicago
Lyric Opera of Chicago
English National Opera
Royal Opera Covent Garden
New York City Opera
Santa Fe Opera
Spoleto Festival Italy
Munich Staatsoper

Resident Opera Director, 2009
Artistic Director, 1994-1999.
Assistant Stage Director, 1989-1990.
Supernumerary Coordinator, 1985-1986
Artistic Director, 1984-2003
Assistant Stage Director, 1982-1984
Assistant to Director John Copley, 1981-1982
Assistant to Director John Copley, 1981
Special Assistant to Guest Stage Directors, 1981-1982
Assistant Stage Director, 1980
Musical Assistant, 1978
Assistant to Director Gian Carlo Menotti, 1978

Opera Stage Direction—Most Recent

(For more complete listing, see www.ovationmanagement.com)

<i>The Old Maid and the Thief</i> (Menotti)	St. Petersburg Conservatory, Russia	2010
<i>The Magic Flute</i> (Mozart)	Opera Naples, Florida	2010
<i>Madama Butterfly</i> (Puccini)	Opera at the Acorn Theatre, Michigan	2009
<i>Nozze di Figaro</i> (Mozart)	Bay View Music Festival, Michigan	2009
<i>Rigoletto</i> (Verdi)	Opera Naples, Florida	2009
<i>Die Fledermaus</i> gala (J. Strauss)	Opera Naples, Florida	2009
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Battle Creek Symphony, Michigan	2008
<i>Madama Butterfly</i> (Puccini)	Village Players Theatre, Illinois	2007
<i>Amahl and the Night Visitors</i> (Menotti)	Opera Naples, Florida	2006
<i>L'enfant Prodigue</i> (Debussy)	Opera Naples, Florida	2006
<i>Nozze di Figaro</i> (Mozart)	Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre	2004
<i>Susannah</i> (Floyd)	DuPage Opera Theatre	2002
<i>La Bohème</i> (Puccini)	Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre	2002
<i>Gianni Schicchi</i> (Puccini)	Chicago Opera Theater	2000
<i>Buoso's Ghost</i> (Ching)	Chicago Opera Theater	2000
<i>Madama Butterfly</i> (Puccini)	Cedar Rapids Opera Theater	2000
<i>Tales of Hoffmann</i> (Offenbach)	Chicago Opera Theater	1999
<i>Bon Appétit</i> (Hoiby)	Chicago Opera Theater	1998
<i>Grand Duchess of Gérolstein</i> (Offenbach)	Chicago Opera Theater	1997
<i>Italian Girl in Algiers</i> (Rossini)	Chicago Opera Theater	1996
<i>Ariadne auf Naxos</i> (R. Strauss)	Chicago Opera Theater	1996
<i>The Tender Land</i> (Copland)	Chicago Opera Theater	1995
<i>Ballad of Baby Doe</i> (Moore)	Chicago Opera Theater	1994
<i>Bluebeard's Castle</i> (Bartok)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1993
<i>Susanna's Secret</i> (Wolf-Ferrari)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1993
<i>Il tabarro</i> (Puccini)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1993
<i>The Magic Flute</i> (Mozart)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1993
<i>Falstaff</i> (Verdi)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1992
<i>La Bohème</i> (Puccini)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1992
<i>Così fan tutte</i> (Mozart)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1991

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Opera Stage Direction (Continued)

<i>Werther</i> (Massenet)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1991
<i>Tosca</i> (Puccini)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1991
<i>Così fan tutte</i> (Mozart)	Berkeley Opera, California	1990
<i>Marriage of Figaro</i> (Mozart)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1990
<i>Gianni Schicchi</i> (Puccini)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1990
<i>The Lifework of Juan Diaz</i> (L. Rapchak)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1990
<i>The Hero</i> (Menotti)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1989
<i>The World of the Moon</i> (Haydn)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1989
<i>Madame Butterfly</i> (Puccini)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1989
<i>La Bohème</i> (Puccini)	Jacksonville (Florida) Lyric Theatre	1988
<i>Barber of Seville</i> (Rossini)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1988
<i>La Traviata</i> (Verdi)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1988
<i>Marriage of Figaro</i> (Mozart)	Berkeley Opera, California	1988
<i>Falstaff</i> (Verdi)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1987
<i>Don Giovanni</i> (Mozart)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1987
<i>Rigoletto</i> (Verdi)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1987
<i>Bluebeard's Castle</i> (Bartok)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1986
<i>Falstaff</i> (Verdi)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1986
<i>Il trittico</i> (Puccini)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1985
<i>Così fan tutte</i> (Mozart)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1985
<i>Allonso and Valleria</i> (Johnson)	Sarasota Opera Apprentice Program	1984
<i>Marriage of Figaro</i> (Mozart)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1984
<i>La Traviata</i> (Verdi)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1984
<i>La Bohème</i> (Puccini)	Chamber Opera Chicago	1983

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REVIEWS

COSI FAN TUTTE

“I left with a feeling of exultation....[The production] renews [one's] faith in the vitality and immortal relevance of opera for the modern world.”

Opera Monthly

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

“Stage director Carl Ratner has brought off a perfectly poised performance in which the humor is delicate in its delivery but positively deadly in its satire. He targets these characters for the petty, deceptive fools they are, but the moments of love and passion they share come across as deep and genuine.”

Chicago Tribune

L'ITALIANA IN ALGERI

“Ratner's direction revealed a genius for comic timing.... Rossini would have approved.”

Opera

FALSTAFF

“The staging by Carl Ratner was superb. Every gesture worked, the comic timing was perfect, and the stage business, though amusing, was never distracting. It perfectly complemented the comic brilliance of Verdi's score. The screen scene was particularly well handled. I would be overjoyed to see such a clean, good-humored production of (Shakespeare's) Merry Wives. An opera with this level of theatricality is almost unheard of.”

Gray City Journal
(University of Chicago)

THE TALES OF HOFFMANN

“His English adaptation [was] intelligent and his direction flawless.”

Opera

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BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

“Bluebeard gets a compelling production.... The need for concentrated mood and atmosphere is acutely appreciated and met in Carl Ratner's ritualistic staging.”

Chicago Tribune

ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

“Chicago Opera Theater Kicks off its 1996 Spring OperaFest with a triumphant staging of Richard Strauss' rarely revived chamber-opera gem Ariadne auf Naxos.... Artistic Director Carl Ratner finds just the right balance between philosophy and comedy in his brisk staging.”

Chicago Sun-Times

THE TENDER LAND

“Ratner's staging refused to treat the opera as a sentimental idyll; the characters' emotions were as real as words and music allowed them to be. This is the first Tender Land I have seen where the ending did not strain credulity.”

Chicago Tribune

THE BALLAD OF BABY DOE

“Carl J. Ratner's stage direction is strong throughout, with the work's best scenes--a campaign rally for William Jennings Bryan and the final hallucinatory mingling of Tabor and Doe's destinies--presented in ways both poignant and stirring.”

Chicago Sun-Times

THE HERO

“Director Carl Ratner was involved in the 1980 Juilliard revival of The Hero, which was supervised by Menotti. He kept the action crisp and fast-moving--even delightfully riotous at times....”

Chicago Reader

Excerpts from recent review of Susannah

Powerful drama is at the heart of DuPage Opera's Susannah

From the bold opening--a group of accusing fingers pointed at a girl in the midst of grim faces--the production establishes itself at once as a drama first, an opera second.

After all, it is not virtuosity alone but the story and how it is told that grip an audience.... Through eviscerating scenes that are well-acted, DuPage Opera Theatre has risen to the challenge set by Floyd. The result is a rousing staging of "Susannah"....

The production's dramatic power owes itself to Carl Ratner's decisive stage direction, which never wavers in getting directly to the point. This is never more evident than the scene in which Susannah (Christine Steyer) is tempted to confess her sins before Rev. Olin Blich (David M. Garry)

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and the congregation.

Here the townspeople seem like a moving mass of one, trembling in awe and terror at Blich's rasping intonations about eternal damnation. So coercive is Blich's power, it seems entirely believable even the usually defiant Susannah would forget herself and become, like the congregation around her, a repenting sinner.

In other instances, the stage direction becomes a tool to evoke the richly textured life of a town brimming with activity. It seems as if all of the players, whether onstage in plain view or part of the backstage crew have conspired together to make this a truly dynamic production. The tremendous effort demonstrated in "Susannah" pays off for all around with a production that represents a triumph for DuPage Opera.