

LEON WILSON CLARK
OPERA SERIES

SHEPHERD SCHOOL OPERA

and members of the

SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

present

ALBERT HERRING

A comic opera in three acts

Music by Benjamin Britten

Libretto by Eric Crozier

Debra Dickinson, stage director

Marlon Chen, conductor

Michael Franciosi, musical preparation

November 20, 22, 24 and 25, 2003

7:30 p. m.

Wortham Opera Theatre

RICE UNIVERSITY

the
Shepherd
School
of Music

CAST

<i>Lady Billows, an elderly autocrat</i>	<i>Laurelle Gowing</i>
<i>Florence Pike, her housekeeper</i>	<i>Stacia Morgan</i>
<i>Miss Wordsworth, head teacher</i>	<i>Melody Wolleat</i>
<i>Mr. Gedge, the Vicar</i>	<i>Todd Trebour</i>
<i>Mr. Upfold, the Mayor</i>	<i>Alejandro Mendoza</i>
<i>Superintendent Budd</i>	<i>Max Wier, IV</i>
<i>Sid, the butcher's assistant</i>	<i>Christopher Green</i>
<i>Albert Herring, from the greengrocer's</i>	<i>Daniel Buchanan</i>
<i>Nancy, from the bakery</i>	<i>Jennifer Moore</i>
<i>Mrs. Herring, Albert's mother</i>	<i>Wendy Hunt</i>
<i>Emmie, a village child</i>	<i>Alexandra Boulé-Buckley</i>
<i>Cis, a village child</i>	<i>Sara Crain</i>
<i>Harry, a village child</i>	<i>Chanel Wood</i>

COVERS

<i>Lady Billows</i>	<i>Wendy Hunt</i>
<i>Miss Wordsworth</i>	<i>Alexandra Boulé-Buckley</i>
<i>Mr. Gedge</i>	<i>Brian Speck</i>
<i>Superintendent Budd</i>	<i>David Herrington</i>
<i>Sid</i>	<i>Carlton Goss</i>
<i>Albert Herring</i>	<i>Beau Gibson</i>
<i>Nancy</i>	<i>Aline Carnes</i>
<i>Mrs. Herring</i>	<i>Maggie Malone</i>
<i>Emmie</i>	<i>Marianna Suri</i>
<i>Cis</i>	<i>Andrea Shank</i>
<i>Harry</i>	<i>Emily Vacek</i>

Members of the SHEPHERD SCHOOL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Larry Rachleff, Music Director

Violin I	Flute and Alto Flute	Harp
<i>Jaqueline Metz</i>	<i>Andrea Kaplan</i>	<i>Nuiko Wadden</i>
Violin II	Oboe	Percussion
<i>Ni Mei</i>	<i>Sonja Thoms</i>	<i>Evan Bertrand</i>
Viola	Clarinet and Bass Clarinet	Piano
<i>Aleksandra Holowka</i>	<i>Brian Hermanson</i>	<i>Calogero Di Liberto</i>
Cello	Bassoon	Orchestra Manager
<i>Marieve Bock</i>	<i>Catherine Luczkiw</i>	<i>Martin Merritt</i>
Double Bass	Horn	Orchestra Librarian and Assistant Personnel
<i>Andrew Stalker</i>	<i>Caroline Siverson</i>	<i>Kaaren Fleisher</i>

Albert Herring

by Benjamin Britten (1913-1975)

Composed in 1947 with libretto by Eric Crozier
and based on *Le rosier de Madame Husson*, a short story
by Guy de Maupassant, *Albert Herring* was written to launch the
first season of The English Opera Group and was first performed
at the Glyndebourne Opera House, England, on June 20, 1947.

The action takes place at Loxford, a small market town
in East Suffolk, England, during April and May of 1900.

ACT I

Scene 1 - The morning of April tenth,
in the parlor of Lady Billows' house.

Scene 2 - Immediately following,
at Mrs. Herring's greengrocery shop.

INTERMISSION

(15 minutes)

ACT II

Scene 1 - The afternoon of May first,
in the Vicarage garden.

Scene 2 - Shortly following,
at Mrs. Herring's greengrocery shop.

ACT III

Scene 1 - The next morning,
at Mrs. Herring's greengrocery shop.

This production is made possible by a generous
endowment from the late Dr. Leon Wilson Clark.

ARTISTIC AND PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Director	Debra Dickinson
Conductor	Marlon Chen
Musical Preparation and Vocal Coach	Michael Franciosi
Costume Designer	Freddy Reymundo
Set Designer	Kirk Markley
Lighting Designer and Technical Director	Graf Imhoof
Stage Manager and Properties Master	Alex Stutler
Scenic Painter	Jason Foreman
Dialect Coach	Joan Allouache
Rehearsal Accompanists	Calogero Di Liberto, Kana Mimaki
Surtitles Operator	Emily Motherwell
Followspot Operator	Anthony Alioto
Running Crew	Carlos Vincente

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

*In **Albert Herring**, which is based on **Le rosier de Madame Husson**, a short story by Guy de Maupassant, a young man from a repressive society goes out on a binge after his provincial hometown honors his virtue by crowning him May King. Benjamin Britten wrote the opera in 1947 for his own newly formed chamber opera company, the English Opera Group, which was dedicated to the advancement of contemporary English opera. It was first performed at Glyndebourne, and then at the Aldeburgh Festival. **Albert Herring** was written as a companion piece to **The Rape of Lucretia** (1946); both followed the chamber opera format in which there was no chorus, with a reduced instrumentation and an ability to transport the production for touring purposes throughout England.*

*The themes in several of Britten's works – hypocrisy and intolerance, an individual at odds with the society in which he lives, the loss of innocence – are all present in **Albert Herring**, but here, unlike **Peter Grimes** (1945) or **Billy Budd** (1951), they are treated as farcical comedy. The local dignitaries who are appalled by the lack of moral rectitude in the younger generation (evidently, Albert is the only virgin in the entire town!) are all village "types" known to Britten from his association with his own native Suffolk, and he satirizes their strait-laced self-righteousness with great accuracy and wit. The younger generation, represented by the village children, Sid, Nancy, and Albert himself, are treated in a much warmer, more appealing manner. Clearly Britten and Crozier are on the side of the more modern and morally lenient generation. Albert's liberating night of debauchery, though shocking and reprehensible to the upright and uptight citizens of Loxford, is applauded and celebrated by his contemporaries.*

So what happens to Albert after his wild fling? In de Maupassant's original short story, the hero ends up becoming an alcoholic, floundering in the gutter and finally dying of delirium tremens. Crozier and Britten's decidedly more upbeat ending suggests that Albert will settle down now into his quiet village life, changed by his experience, though certainly not ruined by it, for as Albert says, his night of drinking and debauchery "wasn't much fun." And we can assume that his farewell to innocence leaves him wiser and fitting in more easily with his own peer group, young people with considerably looser morals and less hypocrisy than the previous generation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BIOGRAPHIES

*DEBRA DICKINSON is Artist Teacher of Opera Studies for Acting and Movement at the Shepherd School of Music. Ms. Dickinson was a professional singer and actress in New York for fifteen years before starting her career as a director. She performed with Richard Burton on Broadway in **Camelot** and as Guenevere opposite Richard Harris in the subsequent national tour. Favorite roles she has played include Jellylorum in the German language production of **Cats** at Theatre an der Wien in Vienna; Adriana in **The Boys from Syracuse** at the Goodspeed Opera; and Azuri in **The Desert Song** at Central City Opera and Chautauqua Opera. She began her directing career by serving as Assistant Director for **Naughty Marietta** at Beverly Sills' New York City Opera at Lincoln Center, and later she was the Associate Director of **The Pajama Game** there as well. Other directing credits include **Così fan tutte**, **The Marriage of Figaro**, **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, **Die Fledermaus**, **Albert Herring**, **The Pirates of Penzance**, and **Amahl and the Night Visitors** here at the Shepherd School; **The Tender Land** at the Monteux Opera Festival in Maine; **A Grand Night for Singing** at the Pittsburgh Public Theater; **Die Fledermaus** at Florida State University; and **She Loves Me** and **The World Goes Round** at Stages, an Equity theater in Houston. Ms. Dickinson received an undergraduate degree from Northwestern University and a graduate degree from Hunter College in New York City. She has taught master classes in acting and movement for Houston Grand Opera, Houston Ebony Opera, and the Berkshire Opera; was the acting instructor for the Chautauqua Opera for four years; and was the recipient of the Shelfer Chair in Music Theater at Florida State University. She has been on the faculty of the Shepherd School for nine years, where she directs scenes programs and teaches Opera Workshop, Acting for Singers, Movement, and Directing. Ms. Dickinson also teaches workshops in auditioning for opera and musical theater, ballet, and waltz, and gives private aria coachings.*

MARLON CHEN graduated with a Master of Music degree in conducting from the Shepherd School of Music in May of 2001 having studied with Larry Rachleff. He returns to the Shepherd School this season as staff conductor. A resident of Houston for twenty-one years, he attended the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. He studied clarinet

at the University of Michigan and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in music (1995). Mr. Chen has participated in the Aspen Music Festival's conducting seminar with Murry Sidlin and David Zinman. In the summers of 2000 and 2001, Mr. Chen studied operatic conducting with Italian conductor Gianluigi Gelmetti at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy. Last summer he conducted **Madame Butterfly** at the English School of Opera Festival in Kingston, England. In addition to his responsibilities at the Shepherd School, he is currently associate conductor of the Youth Orchestras of San Antonio, orchestra conductor at the University of Incarnate Word in San Antonio, and music director of the Southeast Texas Youth Symphony.

MICHAEL FRANCIOSI began his professional career nearly twenty years ago and has been actively involved with opera ever since. He is currently Artist Teacher of Opera Studies at the Shepherd School of Music. Prior to his association with the Shepherd School, he was an assistant conductor with Houston Grand Opera for seven seasons. During his tenure with Houston Grand Opera, Mr. Franciosi, in addition to the many mainstays of the opera repertoire, had the privilege of participating in many world premieres, among which were Daniel Catan's **Florenzia en el Amazonas**, Mark Adamo's **Little Women**, and Stewart Wallace's **Harvey Milk**. Before his move to the Houston area, Mr. Franciosi resided in New York City, where he worked as a vocal coach and recital accompanist. He has also been a guest assistant conductor with various regional opera companies, among which are the San Francisco Opera Center, Greater Miami Opera, Sarasota Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and Opera/Omaha. In addition, he has maintained a strong relationship with The Santa Fe Opera, where he joined the music staff in the summer of 1995. In Europe, Mr. Franciosi was a guest coach at the European Center for Opera and Vocal Art in Belgium for several seasons, and he also participated with the company in two residencies at the National Theatre in Prague. Mr. Franciosi is a native of Cumberland, Maryland, and received his undergraduate degree from West Virginia University and his graduate degree from the Manhattan School of Music.

SHEPHERD SCHOOL VOICE DEPARTMENT
AND OPERA STUDIES FACULTY

Kathleen Kaun, Professor of Voice and Chair of the Voice Department
Janet de Chambrier, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies
Debra Dickinson, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies for Acting and Movement
Joyce Farwell, Professor of Voice
Michael Franciosi, Artist Teacher of Opera Studies
Thomas Jaber, Associate Professor of Music, Director of
Choral Activities, and Vocal Coach
Stephen King, Professor of Voice

