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Singing praises of MetroWest Opera's 'Little Women'



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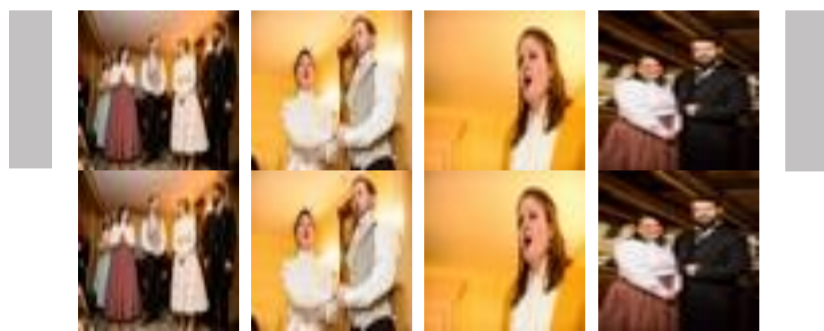
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At a recent fundraiser at Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House in Concord, from left, Kelley Hollis, Alexandra Dietrich, Brad Raymond, Maggie Finnegan, Seth Grondin are all in costume to perform an operatic adaptation of "Little Women." MetroWest Opera will perform the opera in Newton March 3 to 6. Courtesy Photo/Co Co Boardman



At a recent fundraiser at Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House in Concord, from left, Kelley Hollis, Alexandra Dietrich, Brad Raymond, Maggie Finnegan, Seth Grondin are all in costume to perform an operatic adaptation of "Little Women." MetroWest Opera will perform the opera in Newton March 3 to 6. Courtesy Photo/Co Co Boardman



By Keith Powers/Daily News Correspondent

Posted Feb. 25, 2016 at 9:06 AM

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Louisa May Alcott said never to do it, but Mark Adamo did it anyway. And everyone seems to love it.

Adamo's opera "Little Women," based on the still-popular 19th century novel that details the coming of age of Jo March and her three sisters, premiered in 1998 and has since been staged by almost three dozen companies, in hundreds of productions. MetroWest Opera will be next, bringing Adamo's opera adaptation to life at Lasell College in Newton with four stagings, March 3 through 6.

All this despite Alcott's warning, straight from the pages of the novel: "Jo wouldn't be put into an opera by any means." Adamo fortunately ignored this warning, but as he wrote in his program notes for the original staging by the Houston Grand Opera, it's "a sentence I did not exactly pin over my desk."

Adamo has had considerable success with "Little Women." "We've been so fortunate with this opera," he says. "We've done between three and six productions a year. The piece has been done in conservatory settings, in residencies, and by major companies. And, internationally. And it's been a PBS film.

"One of the reasons that it's embraced, at least on the university level, is because of its varied demands," he says. "You need traditional vocal cantilena, but it's also very chromatic. It's years

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worth of opera workshops in a single score.

"And it's a deeply emotional piece," he says. "There's a lot of dramatic information in a short musical time."

The MetroWest Opera production will be directed by company founder Dana Lynne Varga, and conducted by Lidiya Yankovskaya. Several casts of singers will rotate through the four productions.

The company builds its productions around emerging opera singers, which are selected through a series of vocal competitions. The competitions and subsequent opportunities have had great success, with previous MetroWest winners like soprano Meredith Hansen and mezzo Thea Lobo moving on to substantial careers in the field.

"I'm delighted with the mission of MetroWest," Adamo says. "They honor the artistry of the singers. I happened to meet the conductor (Yankovskaya) in Dallas, and she mentioned that she was going to do 'Little Women.' This piece is driven by the singers - the cliché is that new pieces aren't rewarding for singers - and so I think it's a lovely thing that they are staging it."

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| Gale County | | | | | | 8:00 pm |
| Tavern on Central | | | | | | |
| Juke | | | | | | 8:00 pm |
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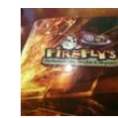
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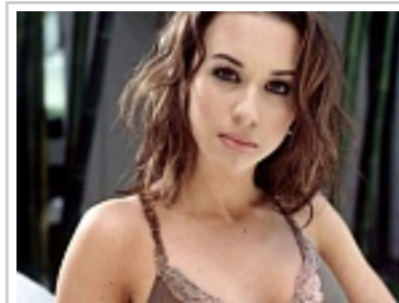
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