

Cleveland Opera Theater presents Opera al Fresco at Dunham Tavern (August 16)

by Mike Telin



On Sunday, August 16 beginning at 6:00 pm, [Cleveland Opera Theater](#) will present its wildly popular free outdoor Opera al Fresco concert at its new location on the grounds of historic [Dunham Tavern](#) at 6709 Euclid Avenue in Cleveland's MidTown district. This family-friendly concert, which has traditionally been held at the Italian Cultural Gardens, is relocating this year to coincide with the company's recent move to MidTown and its ongoing plans to increase community involvement and civic impact.

"I'm excited to able to introduce another hidden gem of Cleveland to audiences," COT's founder and executive director, Andrea Anelli, said during a recent telephone conversation. "I always loved the Cultural Gardens. When we began the Opera al Fresco concerts, the audience was quite small. Over time, it was a thrill to see more people not only coming to the concert, but also to the area, because they too fell in love with it."

As a life-long Clevelander, Anelli was ashamed that she was unfamiliar with Dunham Tavern, but was totally taken by the gardens and green space as well as its historical significance. "The buildings are so beautiful. It's amazing to be in the middle of an urban setting and to be able to go back in time."

The master of ceremonies will be Jacqueline Gerber, Queen of the Morning on WCLV, 104.9 FM. The concert will feature special guest [Lindsay Ammann](#), a contralto and international opera star who has given acclaimed performances with the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Stuttgart Opera. "A true contralto voice is not common," Anelli pointed out, "so we are looking forward to having her join us."

Ammann (*pictured below*) will be joined by sopranos Andrea Anelli and Marian Vogel, tenors Benjamin Bunsold and Timothy Culver, baritones Brian Keith Johnson and Benjamin Czarnota, assisted by pianist Jeanette Davis. The afternoon's playlist will include selections from Verdi's *La traviata*, Puccini's *La bohème*, Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*, and Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, as well as selections from light opera and Neapolitan songs. "Because there are seven of us, it's a great opportunity for listeners to hear many different types of voices singing solo arias and ensembles," Anelli said.



Audiences are encouraged to come early for some opera tailgating by bringing lawn chairs or a blanket, packing a picnic, or by purchasing culinary selections from seven on-site food trucks beginning at 5:00 pm.

COT board president and MidTown board member Don Scipione could not be more excited that Opera al Fresco is being held at Dunham Tavern, and that COT setting down roots in MidTown. "I was president of Lyric Opera Cleveland many years ago, but what got me excited was the idea that this company would be making a home in MidTown, which is half-way between downtown and University Circle," Scipione said. "This entire area is being heavily redeveloped, but what's still missing is more reasons for people to come to the area outside working hours — not just from the east and west sides but from the surrounding neighborhoods of Glenville and Fairfax that are almost within walking distance."

Event sponsors include MidTown Cleveland Inc., Dunham Tavern, and the RTA. "The people at Dunham are excited about the event because it adds to their outreach of art and

music. The RTA is happy to be a sponsor as well, because Dunham Tavern is right on its RTA Health Line,” Scipione pointed out. Free parking will be available at Gallucci’s Italian Market as well as in other area parking lots.

Patrons who purchase VIP tickets can learn more about Cleveland Opera Theater and their 2015-16 season by attending a one-hour reception in the Dunham Tavern Barn beginning at 5:00 pm. The reception will include a performance of selections from the company’s production of André Previn’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*. COT artistic director Scott Skiba will be on hand to share his thoughts about the upcoming season. More information about Opera al Fresco and the VIP reception can be found [here](#).

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