

**Ohio Light Opera at 40:
season preview, part one**

by Kelly Ferjutz
Special to ClevelandClassical.com

SUNDAY	MON	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2PM		2PM	2PM 7:30PM	2PM 7:30PM	2PM 7:30PM	2PM 7:30PM
						June 16 ★ Pajama Game*
June 17	June 18	June 19	June 20 Pajama Game	June 21 ★ Babes in Arms	June 22	June 23 Babes in Arms Pajama Game*
June 24	June 25	June 26	June 27 Babes in Arms	June 28 ★ 50 Million Frenchmen	June 29 Pajama Game	June 30 50 Million Frenchmen Babes in Arms*
July 1	July 2	July 3	July 4 POPS CONCERT	July 5 ★ Candide	July 6 Babes in Arms	July 7 Pajama Game 50 Million Frenchmen*
July 8 Candide	July 9	July 10 Babes in Arms	July 11 Candide	July 12 ★ Iolanthe	July 13 Candide Pajama Game*	July 14 50 Million Frenchmen Iolanthe*
July 15 Babes in Arms	July 16	July 17 Iolanthe	July 18 ★ La Périchole	July 19 Candide	July 20 La Périchole 50 Million Frenchmen*	July 21 Babes in Arms Pajama Game*
July 22 Iolanthe	July 23	July 24 Pajama Game	July 25 ★ CloClo	July 26 La Périchole Iolanthe	July 27 50 Million Frenchmen Candide*	July 28 Pajama Game Babes in Arms*
July 29 CloClo	July 30	July 31 La Périchole	August 1 CloClo Iolanthe	August 2 50 Million Frenchmen Pajama Game	August 3 Candide Babes in Arms*	August 4 CloClo La Périchole*
August 5 Pajama Game	Aug 6	August 7 50 Million Frenchmen	August 8 CloClo	August 9 La Périchole Iolanthe	August 10 Pajama Game Candide*	August 11 Babes in Arms 50 Million Frenchmen*

Usually, the celebration of an anniversary results in gifts offered by the visitors to the host. But not this time! [Ohio Light Opera](#) is celebrating its 40th anniversary this summer, but they’re gifting the audiences with five OLO premieres! That’s correct – five productions that have never graced the stage of Freedlander Theatre, their home in Wooster, Ohio.

Four of the premieres — *The Pajama Game*, *Babes in Arms*, *Fifty Million Frenchmen*, and *Candide* — are from America’s Lyric Theater tradition, while the fifth — *CloClo* — is steeped in the

Viennese operetta tradition. The season is rounded out with two old friends of OLO, *Iolanthe* and *La Périchole*.

Opening on Saturday, June 16 at 7:30 pm, *The Pajama Game* is known for wonderful tunes and sassy choreography by Bob Fosse (one of his dancers was Shirley MacLaine), debuted in New York in 1954. The show features tunes such as “Hey There,” “Steam Heat,” “Once a Year Day,” and “Hernando’s Hideaway.” Not to give away the plot, but it may be your only chance this year to enjoy a labor dispute between management and workers.

The stage director is Jacob Allen, the choreographer is Spencer Reese, and the conductor is J. Lynn Thompson.

Eighteen years earlier, in 1936, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart collaborated on *Babes in Arms* (opening on Thursday, June 21 at 2:00 pm) which later became a film hit for Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney. While you may think of it as the ‘hey kids, let’s put on a show!’ musical, with its’ rather adult themes this isn’t exactly a show for kids.

However, this version, created the University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music nearly twenty years ago, is somewhat more PC. The plot is still the same. Kids — whose parents are busy in vaudeville — are sent off to a music (work) camp where they find an assortment of youngsters, including those of other races. As you might expect from Rodgers, the music is superb and Hart’s ageless lyrics combined for songs including “My Funny Valentine,” “The Lady is a Tramp,” “Johnny One-Note,” and “Where or When”. For whatever reason, *Babes in Arms* has never been revived on Broadway so this is a terrific opportunity to experience one of the best of the later Rodgers and Hart collaborations.

The production features two ballets choreographed by Spencer Reese. Stage direction is by OLO artistic director Steven A. Daigle, OLO’s Artistic Director and Steven Byess conducts the orchestra.



Everyone knows that Cole Porter loved Paris, and his *Fifty Million Frenchmen* (opening Thursday, June 28 at 2:00 pm) from 1929 includes the gorgeous love song to that city, “You Don’t Know Paree.” Even if you’ve never been there that song will put a lump in your throat. Based on the book by Herbert Fields, Porter wrote the words and music, and it was the first big hit for the composer.

Although the plot is a bit on the frivolous side — an American playboy is determined to marry a girl he thinks is both rich and French — it turns out she’s neither. But her parents think she should marry a grand duke, if they could find one. You should be able to figure out that one ends: Paris in 1929, easy-peasy. But with such engaging music, who cares — only Cole Porter could rhyme ‘armadillo’ and ‘pillow’ in a love song, and make it believable. Among the other classics are “You Do Something to Me” and “You’ve Got that Thing.”

The conductor is H. Lynn Thompson and the stage director is Steven A. Daigle.

It's a double anniversary for OLO's premiere of *Candide* (opening on Thursday, July 5 at 2:00 pm). Not only is it the 40th anniversary of the Company it's also the 100th anniversary of the birth of American musical giant Leonard Bernstein. This version of his *Candide* is from London's Royal National Theater by John Caird. Based on the classic 1759 satire by Voltaire, the original lyrics were supplied by some of America's best writers, although not necessarily experienced at lyricists. Contributors include Stephen Sondheim, John Latouche, Lillian Hellman, Dorothy Parker, as well as Bernstein himself.

The overture is immediately recognizable as is the aria "Glitter and Be Gay" for a very confident coloratura soprano. Other notable songs are "The Best of All Possible Worlds" and "Make Our Garden Grow." The stage director is Steven A. Daigle and the conductor is Steven Byess.

Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* opens Thursday, July 12 at 2:00 pm and Offenbach's *La Périchole* opens on Wednesday, July 18 at 2:00 pm. The premiere of Franz Lehár's *CloClo* is on Wednesday, July 25 at 2:00 pm.

A relatively new tradition at OLO is the Festival Symposium. Held from July 31 through August 3, this year's theme is "Taking Light Opera Seriously." The Symposium will feature roundtable discussions, musical presentations, lectures, and a look toward the company's next forty years. Tickets are available through the ticket office, but don't delay, some events are already close to being sold out.

Freedlander Theatre is located at 1189 Beall Avenue on the campus of the College of Wooster. Tickets can be purchased by phone at 1-330-263-2345 or [online](#).

If you're interested in costumes, *Ohio Light Opera: A Costume Retrospective* is currently on view at the [Wayne County Historical Society](#). Presented in partnership with Ohio Light Opera, the exhibit celebrates OLO's four decades through costume and design. The display is open from 12:00 noon until 1:00 pm prior to every matinee and during the Society's regular hours, Friday and Saturday from 1:00 pm until 4:00 pm. Admission is \$5 per person. The Society is located at 546 E. Bowman, just east of Beall Avenue and is easy to reach from Freedlander Theatre.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com June 11, 2018.

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