

OPERA IN 1 HOUR

PRESS RELEASE

22 September 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Comic opera happening end of November at the popular Youngblood Gallery in Bree Street, CT

The old Maid and the Thief

Biblioteek Productions in collaboration with AGL Opera and Youngblood Arts & Culture presents Menotti's hilarious one act masterpiece "The Old Maid and the Thief" in the popular series Opera in 1 Hour. Originally composed for radio, this risqué comic opera tells a twisted tale of morals and "evil" womanly power featuring a stellar Cape Townian cast. A special family-version of the opera will be performed on Saturday morning, to give young kids a chance to experience opera in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. As usual, the Hot Skillet restaurant will be open for dinner and drinks before and after the show.

MUSIC & LIBRETTO:

Gian Carlo Menotti

CAST:

Jacobi de Villiers - Miss Todd

Janel Speelman - Laetitia

Shirley Sutherland - Miss Pinkerton

Raimondo van Staden-Slabbert - Bob

CREATIVE TEAM:

Raimondo van Staden-Slabbert - original director

Johannes van Staden-Slabbert - musical & resident director



"The devil couldn't do what a woman can; make a thief of an honest man!" - G.C. Menotti

ABOUT THE OPERA: The Old Maid and the Thief

Gian Carlo Menotti (an Italian American composer and librettist b. 1911 d. 2007) wrote this fast-paced comedic sketch in 1939. Originally written for NBC radio, this one-act opera is set in the 30's and exposes the gossips and secrets of a seemingly quiet town. The middle-aged spinster Miss Todd, who spends most of her days simply knitting and gossiping with fellow spinster Miss Pinkerton, has her world turned upside-down when a beggar knocks at her door one rainy afternoon. She and her maid Laetitia quickly become smitten with the handsome wanderer and are eager to shelter him. Even when they find out that he may be an escaped convict, they turn to stealing and robbery to keep him around. Having corrupted all of her morals, Miss Todd is then devastated to discover that not only does Bob not care for her, but he is in fact not the thief. Bob does, however, turn to thievery when he and Laetitia run away together with all of Miss Todd's money when she threatens to pin her own crimes on him.

ABOUT THE SERIES "Opera in 1 Hour: Bite-sized opera in the city"

OPERA IN 1 HOUR (Oi1h) is an innovative operatic series presented by *Biblioteek Productions* in collaboration with *Youngblood Arts & Culture*. This edgy addition to the Mother City music scene follows the success of previous concert series by the same winning team of collaborators - *In the Dark*, *Co/Mission* and *Little Maestros*, featuring regularly among the most popular, sold-out quarterly offerings in the thriving musical calendar of Cape Town. In the line-up one-act operas or one-act adaptations of longer works are presented in new and creative contexts, using innovative resources and often placing them under a probing and relevant new light.

PERFORMANCES - YOUNGBLOOD ARTS & CULTURE, 70 - 74 Bree Street, Cape Town

Friday 22 November 20:00

Saturday 23 November 10:00 (special family-friendly version - 45 minutes)

Saturday 23 November 20:00



Tickets are available through Quicket: <https://qkt.io/O2AzKr> or natasha@youngblood-africa.com

Interview with the creative team and cast:

1. Why did AGL Opera choose to perform this opera specifically?

A: *We (Johannes and Raimondo van Staden-Slabbert – AGL Opera Directors) were introduced to The Old Maid and the Thief three year before AGL Opera opened its doors to the public. Ever since we heard the opera for the first time, we were taken with its comic yet relevant plot and its beautiful music. We had the intrinsic need to put this opera on stage. This is where the conceptualisation of AGL Opera began. An opera company that performs comical yet socially relevant works in English or Afrikaans whilst understanding the time constraints of the post-modern human being. The Old Maid and the Thief was the start of AGL Opera as we know it today. We chose this opera as part of our 2019 season, due to the special place it holds in the company's history and in our hearts.*

2. It's such a strange name for an opera - what's the catch?

A: Janel Speelman (Laetitia)

Menotti's "Old Maid and the Thief" is a comedic, carefully woven plot set in a small, idle, gossip-ridden town. When a mysterious gentleman; who claims to be a wanderer and a beggar knocks at their door, the lives of Miss Todd and her maid, Laetitia, are forever changed! What's ensues thereafter is nothing short of scandalous... but hey, who does not enjoy a juicy, sordid tale once in a while? It is a story about mistaken identity, a quest for power and a desire to be loved. Therefore, the title of the opera refers to all the 3 main characters; Miss Todd being "old", Laetitia being the "maid" and Bob being the "thief".

3. Is this story relevant today, or is it purely comedic relief?

A: Jacobi de Villiers (Miss Todd)

Basically, it is a fun, light-hearted, slightly wacky comedy. But it certainly deals with very relatable themes: the fear of growing old without finding love, the dangers of gossip and jumping to conclusions. For South Africans there is of course that perennial conversation topic, crime, but it's more about the paranoia and misunderstanding that happens when we let our imagination run away with us.

4. Tell us something interesting about your cast?

A: Shirley Sutherland (Miss Pinkerton)

The Old Maid and the Thief is a cast of incredibly talented musicians who not only perform professionally but most are teachers 'by day' that coaches and guides our young future musicians.

5. Tell us a bit about the music. Style, elements etc?

A: Arno Jonas (Piano)

Being a 20th Century Composition, the music of The Old Maid and the Thief is lush and full of surprises. Having motives for each character so different in its own characterisation, it adds to the comic element as well as portraying the identity and personality of every different role, from the inquisitive busy-body Miss Pinkerton to the lonely and self-important Miss Todd. The music itself moves through so many facets rarely reaching a resolution up to the very last C major section.

6. Why is Oi1h an appealing platform for this production?

Johannes van Staden-Slabbert (Producer & Revival Director & Musical Director)

The landscape and reality of the modern / post-modern human being has changed. Together with the ever increasing economic, social, and cultural uncertainty that we are forced to face on a daily basis, the speed at which people live their lives in the 21st century simply does not allow for audience members to spend 3 hours in an opera house, as they try to stay awake after a hard day's work. This is why comical, short and/or abbreviated opera is the future of opera. As The Old Maid and the Thief is comic by nature and has a running time of only 60 minutes, the Oi1H platform supports AGL Opera's drive to not just ensure longevity of opera as an art-form, but to attract and engage new, younger audiences to vitalise opera sustainability in the future.

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RESOURCES:

- BIBLIOTEEK PRODUCTIONS: <http://biblioteek.co.za>
- AGL OPERA: <https://www.aglopera.com>
- YOUNGBLOOD ARTS & CULTURE: <https://youngblood-africa.com>
- OPERA IN 1 HOUR: <https://www.facebook.com/events/389169485085285/>

For more information, please contact:

Magdalene Minnaar

076 835 6561

magdalene@biblioteek.co.za

media@biblioteek.co.za

www.biblioteek.co.za

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