

## Woman's Club of Douglaston 2019-2020

Prepared by Helene Schutz, Programming Chair

**October 3, 2019**

### **Afternoon at the Opera**

Be thrilled by the beautiful sounds of Montserrat Caballe in her interpretation of the *bel canto* repertoire. This Spanish soprano, dubbed "La Superba," received a 25-minute standing ovation in Carnegie Hall demonstrating the delirious adulation of her fans. She is widely counted among the last of the old-time prima donnas for the unique, transcendent purity of her voice and sweeping breadth of her repertoire. For those who follow pop culture, Monserrat recorded a much talked about duet with Freddie Mercury.

Using videos of the diva, we'll learn about the rich, broad tone and smooth phrasing of the *bel canto* style. Simply translated, the term means "beautiful singing style" and originated in Italian multipart and courtly solo singing in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and later developed into Italian opera in the 17<sup>th</sup> through early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its appreciation continues in present times and is known by opera lovers who recognize its beautiful melodies and floods of rapid notes.

**Marc Courtade** is an opera specialist affiliated with Tilles Center, LIU, New York City Opera, The New School, and Lincoln Center. He will guide us through our program with explanatory narration and discussion.

**November 7, 2019**

***Lilia!*** written and performed by Libby Skala

With a musical introduction / prelude by Steve May, mandolinist and violinist.

More than a century ago, a remarkable woman, Lilia Skala, broke barriers that would be considered daring even by today's standards. A female architect, a leading lady of the stage, a refugee of Hitler's Reich, she literally fled for her life during WWII and landed in Queens, NY where she rose from factory worker, to Broadway, to an eventual Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actress opposite Sidney Poitier in *Lilies for the Field*. Enter her granddaughter Libby Skala, an award winning actress in her own right who, under the direction of Gary Austin, founder of Los Angeles' legendary improv company *The Groundlings*, followed her grandmother's time-worn request: "Write a part for me." Here it is.

**December 5, 2019**

**Holiday Music through the Ages with Musica Dolce**

Travel back in time on a colorful, musical journey through Medieval, Colonial, and Victorian periods. You will experience the joy of early music and learn about how these former times influenced music of today. Authentic sounds will be recreated with Medieval winds, Gothic harps, and Baroque violins. Our musicians will perform in period costume.

**Emily Bader and Michael Goudket**, the duo behind Musica Dolce, are acknowledged historical musicians who have performed at the New York Historical Society, Huntington Militia, and the Hamlet of Islip Historical Society among numerous other venues.

**February 6, 2020**

**Louis Armstrong, Jazz Legend, and Queens Resident**

Jazz history comes to life in Corona, Queens, where “Satchmo” chose to live with his wife, Lucille, from 1943-1971. Although celebrated and world famous, he lived in a working-class neighborhood, was unpretentious, and enjoyed the company of neighbors—especially the children who lived near him on the block. The house is now a museum owned by the City of New York and run under the auspices of Queens College.

Lucille generously bequeathed the house to honor her beloved husband’s life and perpetuate his memory and extraordinary achievements. You will be given a video tour of the museum and see interesting artifacts, unusual furnishings that reflect Lucille’s decorating tastes (which were at times extravagant), and an array of appliances from the period that will bring back memories and feelings of nostalgia in many of us. Overall, the museum is an amazingly, well-preserved time capsule of the period.

We will examine the life of this acknowledged musical genius and humanitarian through narrated video and discussion.

**Ricky Riccardi** is the Director of Research Collections for the Louis Armstrong House Museum. He is a radio commentator and author of *What a Wonderful World: The Magic of Louis Armstrong’s Later Years*.

**March 5, 2020**

**Mary Gordon, Solo**

**Mary Gordon** is an acclaimed American writer whose formative roots were spent in Queens. Included in her extensive body of work is the biography of Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk and Douglaston resident. Her writing style is deeply personal, probing and illuminating.

Mary is The MacIntosh Professor of English at Barnard College. Best known for her novels, memoirs, and literary criticism, she was named Official State Author of New York. Her other prestigious awards include The Guggenheim Fellowship for the Creative Arts, Lila Wallace Readers' Digest Writers' Award, O. Henry Award, Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize, and she was inducted to New York Writers' Hall of Fame.

Mary will discuss *Pearl*, her novel about the "time of troubles" in Ireland. These conflicts began in the late 1960s and ended on Good Friday 1998. Although "the troubles" were primarily in Northern Ireland, they had a ripple effect throughout Ireland, England, and elsewhere. Pearl is a protesting American student who intends to starve herself to death in Dublin while chained to a tree. "We are taken to the labyrinth of maternal love, religious faith, and Ireland's tragic history."

*We suggest you read the book prior to the program to maximize this special opportunity.*

The WCD is greatly honored by Mary's willingness to come and share her thoughts with us. We remain her enthused, loyal readership.

**April 2, 2020**

### **Underneath the Paramount Hotel: The Diamond Horseshoe Story**

You will be swept away on a night club adventure while watching a screening of an award-winning documentary about the Diamond Horseshoe which was located in Manhattan's Paramount Hotel. This 1940's glittering dinner theater club was the brain-child of Billy Rose, a Broadway producer, lyricist, and of Ziegfeld Follies fame. Gene Kelly and Betty Gable entertained here while the glamorous patrons dined,

danced, and drank the evening away. Interviews with surviving leggy showgirls, who were required to be 6 feet tall, are included.

**Jesse David Harris** is the Executive Director, creator and narrator of this documentary. He has created numerous other films. In addition, he is an acclaimed independent photographer as well as staff photographer for the Lever House Art Collection.