

WELCOME

Welcome to this very special performance of Gian-Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. This opera, the first-ever written expressly for television, became an instant Christmas classic upon its premiere on December 24, 1951. An opera in one act, it is the touching story of a lame shepherd boy, Amahl, and his widowed mother who are visited by three kings in search of the Christ Child. An estimated five million people saw the live NBC broadcast of *Amahl* and millions more read about its immense success the next day in an unprecedented front-page review in the New York Times, thrusting the opera and classical music into the living rooms of ordinary people across the globe.

Today, nearly 57 years later, UAHuntsville turns to this timeless work for another first: our first, full-length opera production! An opera production is a benchmark of sorts for any artistic or academic entity – daring its participants with artistic complexity and challenging its fiscal capabilities. Thankfully, our College of Liberal Arts supports a thriving artistic environment teeming with students and faculty ready to meet social and economic challenges with a resounding message of hope. And hope, after all, is the prevailing message in this first UAHuntsville opera, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and indeed, the Christmas story itself.

Thank you so much for coming and helping to make this historic event a success!

Happy Holidays,

*The faculty and students of the
Departments of Music and Theater*

CAST AND CREW BIOS



KAREN YOUNG (DIRECTOR) – Karen has been an adjunct voice professor at UAHuntsville for the past 8 years. She holds two B.A. degrees from UAH and most recently completed her Masters of Music in vocal performance at Birmingham-Southern College. Karen's favorite theatrical credits include Magda Sorel (*The Consul*), Suor Angelica (*Suor Angelica*), Desdemona (*Otello*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), Aldonza (*The Man of La Mancha*), Mary Magdalene (*Jesus Christ Superstar*), Assistant Director (*Something's Afoot*),

music director (*Little Shop of Horrors*, *Chorus Line*, *Damn Yankees*) and the premier role of Elsie Hickam in *Rocket Boys, the Musical*. She is thrilled to be a part of this historical music event at her alma mater!!



ERIN COLWITZ (CHORUS MASTER) – Erin received her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in 1998. She later completed the Master of Music in 2004 and the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Southern California in Choral music in 2007. At USC, she was awarded a full teaching assistantship as conductor of the Thornton Oriana Choir, the University's only women's chorus. In Minnesota, Dr. Colwitz was a full-time vocal and general music teacher at Centennial Middle School. While in Los Angeles, Dr. Colwitz was a member of the choral

music faculty at California State University, Fullerton. Dr. Colwitz is currently the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.



DAVID RAGSDALE (MUSIC CONDUCTOR) – C. David Ragsdale, conductor and Asst. Professor of Music at UAHuntsville. In addition to university teaching responsibilities, David conducts the Huntsville Chamber Winds and contributes to the Huntsville Times as Classical Music Critic. Prior to UA Huntsville, David served on the faculty of the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami where he earned the Iron Arrow Award – the university's highest honor for any student, faculty member, or alumnus.



DAVID HARWELL (PRODUCTION DESIGNER) – David is the assistant professor of theatre at UAHuntsville. He started the theatre efforts at UAH in 2005. He received his BFA in theatre at the University of Montevallo and his MFA in Scene Design from the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana. After fifteen years in professional theatre in NYC and beyond, he is happy to be back in his hometown. David is thrilled to join his colleagues for this remarkable endeavor; Opera is a remarkable art form and we are all fortunate to have this opportunity.



MARIANNE WINDHAM (CHOREOGRAPHY) – Marianne Cook Windham has worked over 100 shows the past 30 years in both community and professional theatre. She has received awards from SETC, Birmingham's Obelisk, and Huntsville's own WINGS. In April of 2004, she became the youngest recipient of the prestigious Virginia Hammill Simms Award for volunteerism in the arts. Marianne is President of Windham Entertainment, Inc., and is a member of the International Association of Talents Agents & Producers. She is also co-owner of Windham Travel & Leisure, and partner and

teacher in DanceFit, LLC. It was a pleasure assisting Karen with this production of *Amahl*. Glad tidings to all!



DAWN NEELY (PUBLICITY, STAGE MANAGER) – Dawn received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Alabama and her Master of Arts in Arts Administration from Florida State University. While studying at the University of Alabama and Florida State, Mrs. Neely performed roles such as Gretel, Norina, and Lakmé, in opera scenes and Despina in the full staging of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. She was a finalist in Mobile Opera's Rose Palmai-Tenser Vocal Competition and has participated in the Peter Harrower Opera Workshop in Atlanta, the Rising Star Singers Audition Workshop in Rising Sun, Indiana, and the Richard Crittenden Opera Workshop in Washington D.C.

In addition to Dawn Wells Neely's work as a musician, she has also worked as the public relations director for the Birmingham Music Cooperative, Ars Nova School of the Arts, and as the outreach administrator for Florida State Opera. Dawn Wells Neely was recently a Semi-Finalist in the 2007 National Orpheus Competition and participated in the Memphis Opera and Song Academy through the University of Memphis. Mrs. Neely is currently a part-time faculty member for the University of Alabama at Huntsville's Department of Music, Alabama A & M University's Department of Music, and is pursuing her Doctorate of Musical Arts at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.



SUE LEATHERMAN (KINGS' COSTUME FABRICATION) – Sue has worked as a costume designer for over 25 years. She has worked with both professional and community theatres around the eastern United States. She has also worked with Walt Disney Productions as a costumer and as a dresser for various guest celebrities.



JACKSON LOVE (AM AHL) – Jackson is an 11 year old, home schooled 6th grader who has been in many plays, musicals, and operas in Huntsville. Some of his roles have been Chip in *Beauty and the Beast* (Ars Nova), Johnny in *Really Rosie* (Ars Nova), Wheezy in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (Fantasy Playhouse), royal child in *King and I* (Ovation Arts), and chorus roles in *Gianni Schicchi*, *La Boheme*, and *Carmen*. He is a student of voice, drama and piano at Ars Nova School of the Arts and is a member of the Boys of Ars Nova choir. Jackson can't think of any better Christmas present this year than singing the role of Amahl in

UAH's very first opera. He is honored to be in this production and wishes to thank Mrs. Karen for giving him this opportunity, Mrs. Dawn Neely and Dr. Ragsdale for vocal coaching, Mr. David Harwell for his artistic assistance, and all the fantastic cast for their encouragement. Jackson's prayer is that this opera will cause all to stop and remember the real meaning of Christmas; the birth of the Savior.



MELANIE PAYNE (MOTHER) – Melanie is a first year graduate student at UAH, majoring in English. For over a decade, she has participated in Huntsville's musical community as a musical director, accompanist, piano and voice teacher. She has been the musical director in Huntsville High's productions of *Footloose*, *Annie*, *The Sound of Music*, *Grease*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Les Miserables* (and *Footloose* again in the Spring of '09). She is also the music director at Hope Presbyterian Church where she maintains an active piano/voice studio. She is excited to step out of the orchestra pit to sing her first major operatic lead.



RYAN JUSTICE (KING MELCHIOR) – Ryan is a senior at UAH pursuing a degree in Choral Music Education. He is excited to do his student teaching in the spring of 2009 and graduate in May. Ryan was the assistant conductor of the UAH Concert and Chamber Choirs this fall semester. He plans on teaching choir in a local secondary school before pursuing a graduate studies in Choral Conducting.



RYAN PEST (KING KASPAR) – Ryan is a senior vocal performance major also pursuing a theatre cognate. He has been in many shows including *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Pseudolus), *Follies* (Young Theodore), *Isn't It Romantic* (Paul), *A Christmas Carol* (Bob), *Les Miserables* (Marius), and many others. Ryan would like to thank the production team for the opportunity to participate in his first opera and the enthusiasm that they have shown.



VAN-ARC WRIGHT (KING BALTHAZAR) – Van-Arc Wright was born in Nassau Bahamas and is pursuing a Bachelors degree in Music Education at Alabama A&M University. He came in 1st place in the 2008 National Assoc. of Teachers of Singing state competition in Tuscaloosa, AL as well as N.A.T.S. Regional. He is a member of the ACDA, MENC, and the Thespian Society. In 2007 he performed the role of Angelotti in Ars Nova Inc.'s production of *Tosca*, and in 2008 he performed Escamillo in their production of *Carmen*. Van-Arc has sung with many groups throughout Huntsville and the southeast.

He would like to thank Ginger Beazley and Christopher Jordan for being instrumental on his musical journey.



PETER MURPHY (PAGE) – Peter Murphy - Peter is a junior at UAH, studying Electrical Engineering. He has been in many theatre productions, including UAH's Spring '08 musical, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.



OLIVER BREEN (CHORUS) – Oliver is a freshman vocal performance major at UAH and this is his first opportunity to participate in an opera production. He is very excited to be a part of this historical musical experience at UAH.



SARAH ERVIN (CHORUS) – Sara is a freshman at UAH. She plans to major in English and has enjoyed moving to Huntsville from Raleigh, NC. She has been performing vocal music since she was 4, but this is her first opera.



ROBERT GAMBLE (CHORUS) – Robert is a music student at UAH. He is a freshman and active in the UAH choral program. He has lived in Alabama his entire life, and this is his first opera.



BESS JERNIGAN (CHORUS, REHEARSAL PIANIST) – Bess is currently in her second year at UAH as a choral music education major where she studies voice with Karen Young and piano with Dr. Sarkis Baltaian. She would like to thank everyone involved in the opera and for allowing her to serve as the rehearsal pianist. It has been such a wonderful experience!



SARA MCFADDIN JOHNSON (CHORUS) – Sara is a senior at UAH majoring in music with an emphasis in vocal performance. She sings with the UAH concert and chamber choirs. She also sings with Central Presbyterian church choir and is the children's choir director. She would like to thank her family for their support, especially her husband and sweet, nine month old son, Jonah.



SARA KREIPE (CHORUS, DANCER) – Sara has been involved with theatre and music for almost ten years, and is currently pursuing a bachelors in music and a minor in theatre at UAH. She is very excited about being part of UAH's first opera. Sara will be performing in the spring as Audrey, in UAH's performance of *Little Shop of Horrors*.



MOLLIE LOVE (CHORUS, DANCER) – Mollie is a 13 year old homeschooled 8th grader who has been performing since she was 6. She is a student of voice, improv, dance and violin. Mollie's latest roles include the characters of Rosie in the musical *Really Rosie* and Sam-I-Am in the opera *Green Eggs and Ham*. She is the big sister of Amahl.



JIM MANDRAS (CHORUS) – Jim is glad to be back on stage, having sung in numerous musical productions over the last twelve years. Jim is employed by UAH's SMAP Center as a research scientist and thanks Karen Young for this opportunity.



ANDREW NOBLE (CHORUS) – Andrew is a tuba performance major in his fourth year of study at UAH. He looks forward to his first on stage theatrical performance in *Amahl*.



CHERYL ROSE (CHORUS/UNDERSTUDY FOR MOTHER) – Cheryl is currently in her 3rd year at UAH where she is studying mechanical engineering and music. This is her first opera ever and she would like to thank Karen for this wonderful opportunity. Cheryl would also like to thank her family and friends for all their love and support, and God for everything He has done in her life.



NIKKI SHEDD (CHORUS) – Nikki is a sophomore at UAH where she is a nursing major. She also enjoys performing with the UAH concert choir and women's choir. This is her first operatic experience.



RACHEL SPEAKMAN (CHORUS) – Rachel is a sophomore nursing major at UAH, and music minor. This is her first time to be in an opera.



MARILYN WEST (CHORUS, DANCER) – Marilyn is a choral music education major, a member of the UAH chamber choir, and soprano section leader in the UAH concert choir. She studies voice with Karen Young. This is her first production at UAH.



LEANNA WHITAKER (CHORUS) – LeAnna is currently a sophomore at UAH and she is a music education major with a choral emphasis. She greatly enjoys performing with the UAH concert and chamber choirs under the direction of Dr. Erin Colwitz, and she studies voice with Karen Young.



ELIZABETH WHORTON (CHORUS) – Elizabeth is a freshman choral music education major at UAH. This will be her first opera, but she has been involved in five theatre productions in the past: *Once on this Island*, *Into the Woods*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Godspell*, and *Children of Eden*.



ERIC WILSON (CHORUS) – Dr. Eric Wilson received his Bachelor's degree in piano performance in 1997 from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, where he studied under Amanda Penick. He is currently the music director at Epworth United Methodist Church, and works full-time as a systems analyst for Delta Research, a missile defense company based here in Huntsville.



SAMUEL WILSON (CHORUS) – Samuel Wilson makes his stage debut at 4 1/2 in "Amahl and the Night Visitors." He attends Asbury's CDC program and enjoys music and trains. He is the son of Eric and Nicky Wilson.

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CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE

**UAH MUSIC
STUDENTS**

**Break a
Leg!**

DR. AND MRS. RON WRAY

Amahl and the

By Gian-C

CAST AND CREW

DIRECTOR	Karen Young
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	David Harwell
CONDUCTOR	David Ragsdale
CHORUS MASTER	Erin Colwitz
AM AHL	Jackson Love
MOTHER	Melanie Payne
KING MELCHIOR	Ryan Justice
KING KASPAR	Ryan Pest
KING BALTHAZAR	Van-Arc Wright
PAGE	Peter Murphy
DANCERS	Mollie Love Sara Kreipe Marilyn West
CHORUS	Oliver Breen Sara Ervin Robert Gamble Bess Jernigan Sara Johnson Jim Mandras Andrew Noble Cheryl Rose Nikki Shedd Rachel Speakman LeAnna Whitaker Elizabeth Whorton Eric Wilson Samuel Wilson

e Night Visitors

Carlo Menotti

CAST AND CREW (CONTINUED)

CHOREOGRAPHER	Marianne Windham
PUBLICITY	Dawn Neely
TICKET SALES	Cil Spina, AB Stephens Music
KINGS' COSTUME DESIGN & FABRICATION	Sue Leatherman
COSTUMES	Latifa Houston, Mary Whorton
SET DESIGN	David Harwell
SET CONSTRUCTION	Mark S. Eccleston, Glenn Humphrey, Doug Love, James Wolfsberger, Stephen Nelson, Peter Murphy
PROGRAM LAYOUT	Lisa Jose
POSTER & PROGRAM PRINTING	UAHuntsville Printing Services
STAGE MANAGERS	Cheryl Rose, Sara Johnson

ORCHESTRA

FLUTE	Jacqui Howell
OBOE	Lisa Schneider
CLARINET	Michael Wood
BASSOON	Sara Mitchell
HORN	Angelina Antonison
TRUMPET	Carolyn Sanders
PERCUSSION	Cydney Thomson
PIANO	Erin Colwitz
KEYBOARD	Calli Woodard
VIOLIN	Jeffrey Dortch
VIOLIN	Charles Hogue
VIOLA	Rodena Tharpe
CELLO	Rachael Gregory
BASS	Nick Walker

SPECIAL THANKS

ABSTEPHENS MUSIC:

JOHN MILLER AND JANET PARKS

BEVERLY KETCHUM

BILL DEHNING

CIL SPINA

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH:

BILLY ORTON AND ELIZABETH HOSTETTER

GATEHOUSE FLOWERS:

CHIP PADGETT

GLENN DASHER

GLENN HUMPHREY

GO! MAGAZINE HUNTSVILLE TIMES:

KARI SMITH

HIGHLANDS BAPTIST CHURCH

HUNTSVILLE CHAMBER MUSIC GUILD

JOYCE AND DOUG LOVE

LISA JOSE

MYSTIC GULF PRODUCTIONS

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STEPHEN CLAYBROOKS

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WLRH: SUSAN SANDERSON

JUDY WATTERS

BILL WELLS



*This opera is brought to you
in part by*

Ol' St. Nick!



*Thank you, Santa,
For fulfilling our Opera Dreams!!!*

– The Cast and Crew