

Set Design by Edwin Triggs  
Lighting Design by David Groupe  
Costumes designed by Alex Bowe and Caitlin Ward  
Stage Manager Sarah Leigh  
Light Board Jennifer Morgan  
Makeup - A. M. Iliana Filby  
Construction Crew - Christopher Stettner, Sarah Troderman,  
Frances Lombard, Yasmin Kahn, Brendan  
Kirkpatrick  
Lighting Crew - Lisa Waxman, Teresa Smith, Nathan Thompson  
Costume Construction - Alex Bowe, Caitlin Ward, Alice Wu,  
Kelcey Jacobsen  
Master Carpenter - Nedley Triggs  
Technical Director - Nedley Triggs  
Posters by Robin Goodman

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BENNINGTON COLLEGE MUSIC DIVISION

Presents

# TWO ONE-ACT OPERAS

Wednesday and Thursday  
November 20 and 21, 1985

7:30 p.m.  
Greenwall Music Workshop

THE SECRET OF SUSANNAH  
by  
ERMANNO WOLF-FERRARI

Interlude in One Act from the French by E. Golisciani  
English Version by Claude Aveling

Setting: Piedmont, 1909

Count Gil ..... Michael Downs  
Countess Susannah ..... Susannah Waters  
Sante, the servant ..... Richard Howe

Count Gil and his wife Susannah are newlyweds. With the help of Sante, Susannah secretly indulges in her passion for smoking, but Gil detects the smell and questions Sante, who insists that no one in the house is responsible. The Count at once concludes the culprit must be a visitor - a lover - and when embracing Susannah he smells the smoke in her hair, finds his suspicions confirmed. Susannah, thinking her husband's accusations refer to her little weakness, makes light of the affair, and Gil, with the lover in mind, is horrified. A stormy scene ensues. When things have calmed down a bit, Susannah once again arouses Gil's suspicions by reminding him of an engagement with friends. He leaves her, however, and goes out. Susannah is now free to enjoy a cigarette. Gil returns suddenly and pounces upon Susannah, seizing her by the hand and burning himself on her cigarette. As soon as he realizes the error of his suspicions, he joyfully decides to take up the habit himself. They light their cigarettes together, and serenity returns to the happy household once more.

Pianist ..... Peter Calabro

Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (1876-1948) was born in Venice of an Italian mother and German father. He wrote thirteen operas, all in Italian, although six received their first performances in Germany, sung in German. While "Susannah's Secret" shows a German influence, it remains identifiable as a descendant in the intermezzo tradition of "La Serva Padrona".

LA SERVA PADRONA  
by  
GIOVANNI BATTISTA PERGOLESI

Setting: Italy, 1733. Master Uberto's bedroom.

Uberto ..... Michael Downs  
Serpina, the maid ..... Susannah Waters  
Vespone, a servant ..... Richard Howe

"La Serva Padrona" is a hard title to translate. "La serva" means a female servant, or a maid, while "la padrona" means the mistress of the house. Uberto is having troubles with "il serva" who wants to be "il padrona." Serpina only follows orders when she is in the mood, and has even begun to order everyone else about, including Uberto. Uberto decides that he can no longer tolerate this situation, and so he must find himself a wife to be the mistress of the house. Serpina wholeheartedly agrees with this, proclaiming herself to be "his chosen bride." Uberto vows that he will never marry his maid. Serpina pretends to be sorry for her behavior, and tells Uberto that she has found a husband for herself and will soon be leaving the household. With the help of Vespone disguised as the rival suitor, Serpina manages to stir up Uberto's emotions. He proposes and she happily accepts.

Orchestra conducted by Jeffrey Levine.

First Violin - Alice Wu	Viola - Naomi Givin
Second Violin - Anatto Ingle	'Cello - Michael Severens
	Bass - Alice Spatz

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) wrote "La Serva Padrona" as an intermezzo to a serious opera of his, and they were premiered in Naples in 1733. "La Serva Padrona" stole the show and went on to serve as a model in the form of opera buffa. It enjoyed great popularity when produced in Paris in 1752 and was soon followed by a French adaptation. Tonight's production borrows elements of that French version, including the use of spoken dialogue.



that certain characters have little to do or sing he should immediately comply with the requests of these singers (or of their rich patrons) to add to their parts. He should always keep at hand a supply of a few hundred arias, in case alterations or additions should be wanted. If the plot should require husband and wife to be put into prison together, and if one of them should have to die, it is absolutely necessary to have the other one stay alive so that he or she can sing an aria of a merry character. This will cheer up everyone in the audience as it will make them realize that, after all, it is only make-believe.

The librettist might notice that the singers pronounce their words indistinctly, in which case he must not correct them. If the virtuosos should see their mistake and enunciate clearly the sale of the libretto might be seriously impaired. A good number of the arias should be so long that it will be impossible to remember the opening bars by the time the middle has been reached. The librettist should pay frequent social calls to the prima donna, since the success of the opera depends on her. He should change his drama as her artistic genius may order him to do, making additions or cuts in her part or that of the bear or other persons. But he must be on his guard not to reveal to her anything about the opera's plot - the modern virtuosa is not supposed to know anything about that."

Excerpts from "Il teatro alla moda" (1720)  
Benedetto Marcello

#### Instructions to modern librettists:

"Before the librettist begins writing he should ask the impresario for a detailed list giving the number and kind of stage sets and decorations he wishes to see employed. He will then incorporate all those into his drama. He should always be on the lookout for elaborate scenes such as sacrifices, sumptuous banquets, apparitions, or other spectacles. When those are to occur in the opera the librettist will consult with the theater engineer in order to find out how many dialogues, monologues, and arias will be needed to stretch each scene of that type, so that all technical problems can be worked out without hurrying. The disintegration of the drama as an entity and the intense boredom of the audience are of no importance in connection with all this...

He should write the whole opera without any preconceived plan but rather proceed verse by verse. For if the audience never understands the plot their attentiveness to the very end of the opera will be insured. One thing any able modern librettist must strive for is frequently to have all characters of the piece on the stage at the same time, though nobody knows why. They then may leave the stage, one by one, singing the usual canzonetta...

The librettist should not worry about the ability of the performers, but so much more about whether the impresario has at his disposal a good bear or lion, an able nightingale, genuine-looking bolts of lightning, earthquakes, storms, etc... For the finale of his opera he should write a magnificent scene with most elaborate effects, so that the audience won't run off before the work is half over.

The librettist must have at hand a supply of old operas (by some other writer) from which he will borrow the plot as well as the stage sets. All he has to change is the meter and the names of some of the characters. If the work should be such