

Local Opera Singer Returning To His Roots

By Shane Jacobus

On October 11th, Severna Park resident Michael Gellert will return to the Baltimore Opera Company for the first time in 16 years as part of the chorus in "Aida." Even though Gellert works for H&M Wagner and

Sons, a restaurant supply company, music has always been his passion - he has spent the last 40 years cultivating his craft as a student, teacher, and singer.

According to Gellert, he began his music career in 1968 singing baritone with The

Sons of the Severn Barber-shop Chorus. He later became a member of the quartets "The Peacemakers" and "Tyson Street." His music career took on a whole new element in 1973 when one of his band-mates introduced him to a voice instructor named Forrest Barrett, whose mentorship over the next eight years would prove to be invaluable.

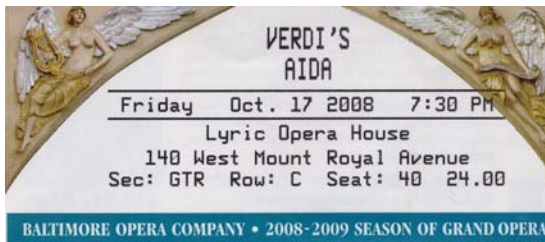
"It was very, very intense," recalled Gellert. "This was the thing that really shaped my life. I actually lived in this man's house and worked with him intensely to the point where I made the transition from rock singer to opera singer, and I was having a lot of vocal problems that he helped me work out."

Gellert continued to work with Barrett and began auditioning for operas for the first time, eventually joining the Baltimore Opera Company in 1979. He continued taking voice lessons from Barrett for another two years until his mentor passed away in 1981 just two weeks after their final instruction. Although Gellert has since become a teacher in his own right, he still acknowledges the impact Barrett had on his life.

"My relationship with Forrest really changed the whole shape of my life, professionally," he says.

Gellert continued singing with the Baltimore Opera Company and has appeared in over 40 productions, over 120

Continued on page A23



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Photo by Brian Lancione

After 16 years, Severna Park resident Michael Gellert will once again share his passion for music as a member of the chorus in the upcoming BOC production "Aida."

Continued from page A21
performances. He left in 1992 to direct the Sweet Adelines with the Elkridge Chorus, which eventually merged with the Towson Valley Chapter of Sweet Adelines International to form the Harbor City Music Company (HCMC) Show Chorus.

"The time that it takes to do what I'm doing here is pretty long," he said. "We have a regional competition coming up and if we win that, we go to the international competition. We've been to seven so far – it's a very busy, high-energy thing we're doing here," he added.

After serving as Master Director for the HCMC and giving private voice lessons for nearly 16 years, Gellert began feeling somewhat nostalgic about his time with the Baltimore Opera Company.

"I decided to do a little something for me so I auditioned again at the Baltimore Opera," confesses Gellert, who was one of 90 people auditioning. He admits he was

fortunate to get a contract. "It's very exciting for me to go back and see a lot of the same people."

For information about the HCMC or Baltimore Opera Company visit www.harborcitymusiccompany.org or www.baltimoreopera.com.

Many in Harbor City Music Company saw Michael's performance and had "rave" reviews! For once, it was fun to "turn-the-tables" and see Michael in performance mode.

ARTISTS OF THE CHORUS

SOPRANO

Phyllis Burg
Jerris Cates
Connie Coffelt Bailey
Natalie Conte
Virginia Forni
Vikki Jones
Erika Juengst
Karen Myers
Jennie Ritter
Margaret Shamer
Sara Stewart
Shaina Vatz

CONTRALTO

Erin Firnhaber Camburn
Alexandra Christoforakis
Catrin Davies

Jenna Lehberz
Victoria Lee Miller
Dyana Neal
Catherine Preziosi
Jessica Renfro
Beth Miller Ryan
Diane Schaming
Tasha Thomas

TENOR

Michael Bevard
Heyk Chae
William Clark
Christopher Cornelli
William Davenport
Michael Ege
Michael Gellert
Kurt Hoffman
Phillip Juengst
David Kirkwood

Frederic Rey
Farrar Strum
Patrick Toomey
Alexander Wolniak

BASS

Andrew Adelsberger
Jason Buckwalter
Philip Collister
Paul Corujo
David Dimmock
Ryan Ebright
Karl Hempel
Timothy Kjer
Peter Murphy
Douglas Peters
Jason Ryan
Eugene Summers
Jason Widney
Jeffrey Williams