



## Culture in brief : Opera Theatre presents 'Amahl'



*Mia Riker-Norrie, general director of OTM, also directs "Amahl and the Night Visitors."*  
COURTESY OPERA THEATRE OF MONTCLAIR

Opera Theatre of Montclair (OTM) will present an abridged narrated version of Gian Carlo Menotti's Christmas

opera “Amahl and the Night Visitors” in Leir Hall at the [Montclair Art Museum](#) on Thursday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m.

It will be sung in English, semistaged and costumed. The performance is part of MAM’s Free First Thursdays series. Admission to the museum and special events that evening will be free.

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[READ: TRADITIONAL ‘HANSEL AND GRETEL’ FROM OPERA THEATRE OF MONTCLAIR](#)

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“Amahl and the Night Visitors” tells the story of a disabled boy and his impoverished mother as they are visited by the Three Magi who on their way to pay homage to a “wondrous child.” OTM’s general director, Mia Riker-Norrie, directs the production. The opera premiered in 1951 and was the first opera written specifically for TV. Since then, it has remained a popular holiday opera for families worldwide.

For more information visit [operamontclair.org](http://operamontclair.org).

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## Thankful for Montclair: readers and staff are grateful



*A display of pumpkins are set on haystacks at the Welcome to South End Montclair sign on Orange Road.  
DEBORAH ANN TRIPOLDI/STAFF*

*Sure, people gripe about Montclair. Nothing is perfect. Traffic. Trees. Supermarkets. Stairways. But at this time of year, we remember to count our blessings. We asked you what you’re grateful for in Montclair, and the answers came thick and fast. Here are some of them, with more online. Feeling thankful? Drop us a note at*

[culture@montclairlocal.news](mailto:culture@montclairlocal.news) and we'll post it!

**Kate Albright, photographer:** "I'm grateful for Montclair Local for getting to know our community better and helping document it."

**Jay Cee:** "Thankful for being six generations strong in Montclair. Thankful my children are humble and honest. Thankful the Montclair local has kept the focus of the town... our village."

**Rachael Quinn Egan:** "Being able to see NYC from Mills Reservation. Our integrated public schools. Our unique and eclectic stores, bars, cafes, and restaurants. Our parklets! The sledding hills. The trees. Our town pools. Our old houses."

**Bud Eager:** "Yantacaw Park."

**Diana Hakim Fennelly:** "COPE Center!!"

**Dorothea Benton Frank, "Dot's Desk:"** "The colors of autumn, that we have such a vibrant cultural life, great restaurants, and our unique population of creative minds."

**Michael Guerriero, owner, Gelotti:** We are most thankful to be able to boast that the best gelato outside of Rome is made right here in Montclair, NJ! And it wouldn't be possible without this tremendous family of a community!

**Linda Jorgensen Guilbert:** "Also the people who ALWAYS rise to the occasion."

**Elizabeth Jackson:** "The people! It attracts a certain kind of person not found in these quantities elsewhere."

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[LOOK: PHOTOS; COUNTING THEIR BLESSINGS AT PAGAN THANKSGIVING](#)

[READ: LOOKING FORWARD TO 2018; MONTCLAIRITES PREDICT THEIR \(CULTURAL\) FUTURES](#)

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**Jacqueline Jacobson:** "The Montclair Film Festival."

**Connie Crowley Keys:** "Our fantastic small businesses. Jonathan at The Light Closet fixed a chandelier for me recently for \$11.50!"

**Nik Lee:** "The friendly staff at Kings. Not the prices, but the staff keeps me going back."

**Loyla Louvis, "Mother Matters" (forthcoming):** I'm thankful for the families in Montclair. It's a privilege to work with such a diverse group of parents who take pride in parenting and are open to change.

**Jasmine D. Malloy:** “The Montclair Art Museum. I miss the Cultural Affairs department of Montclair.”

**Krikor Markarian:** “Small businesses.”

**Steve McCarthy:** Our HBO film “Breslin and Hamill: Deadline Artists” has a special MFF screening in Dec. 3 at the Claridge.

**Rich McMahon, councilman-at-large:** “I was at the hardware store today where I spoke with one of the unfortunate souls who lost his home in the fire the other night. He said that the outpouring of support has been overwhelming and added that, ‘Montclair is a great town to be living in when you get burned out of your home.’ He unexpectedly warmed my heart. Fortunately such a devastating fire doesn’t happen here often, but when it does it’s gratifying to know we take care of our own. I’m thankful that my growing family and I live in such a caring place.”

**Elizabeth Oguss, Montclair Local Listings editor:** “Two things: The abundance of natural beauty and respite to be found in a town only 12 miles west of Manhattan, and the richness and intersectionality of our cultural institutions.”

**Gwen Orel, culture editor:** “I am thankful for the terrific library, that the town has such an irresistible bookstore and for all the people on my beat who keep life interesting.”

**James Powell:** Soo thankful that we’re not full of ourselves.

**Gail Prusslin, vice president, board of trustees, Outpost in the Burbs:** “I am thankful to live in a progressive-minded community where people support and care about human and civil rights, the environment, and the arts. We may be far from perfect, but I know that so many spend time working and volunteering to help make Montclair and the world a better place.”

**Michelle Riccardelli:** “All of the amazing restaurants! Such diversity of cuisine.”

**Mia Riker-Norrie, general director and founder, Opera Theatre of Montclair:** “I’m grateful that Montclair is a place that supports multiple nonprofit arts organizations.”

**Erin Roll, reporter:** “I’m thankful that Montclair has a well-stocked public library and two well-stocked indie bookstores.”

**Robert Russo, councilman-at large:** “We are so thankful in the Russo family to still have mom, Florence Russo, with us this year at 99 and a half going on 100 hundred next April. Best wishes to all those who help make this a Happy Thanksgiving in our unique and progressive town of Montclair, as we celebrate our 150th anniversary!”

**Stefanie Sears, reporter:** “I am thankful for Lacordaire Academy and Montclair State University. Montclair was my place of education for about 10 years and I wouldn’t have had it any other way! I’m also thankful for Studio Players!”

**David A. Shaw, senior minister, Union Congregational Church:** “I’m thankful for the Montclair Clergy Association- a group of religious leaders in our community who support one another both in spite of and because of our differences.”

**Maya Stein and Amy Tingle, The Creativity Caravan:** The leadership of its residents: Montclairians work hard to enrich and inform the community-at-large (Bike & Walk Montclair and See Gallery come to mind specifically). The town is a nest for important conversations: Montclairians do not shy away from engaging in healthy debate. Montclair is a wellspring of ingenuity and experimentation: We have loved being part of a community that encourages and celebrates creative action. A sense of being part of the global family: Montclairians recognize their part in both local and national issues, and mobilize quickly to “be a part of the change” they wish to see in the world.

**Allison Task, “Ask Task:”** I am thankful for the people I know at the places I go. I think of friendships that I’ve built at JavaLove — people like Bob Silver, Richie Fulco, Jill and Peter, Kayla and Monte, the omniscient Jon Bell...Obi Wan and Penny (yep, they are dogs). I am so very happy to see their faces, share more than a few words, and move on with our lives. Friendships and community are built on consistent unplanned meet ups. I love the people I’ve come to know in these places at these times.

**Deborah Ann Tripoldi, editorial assistant:** “I’m very thankful for my new friends and the new adventures I’m on. “U” all know who you are.”

**Robin Woods, “Robin’s Nest:”** “I am thankful that we chose the lower downtown area as our adopted home, where multicultural families are welcome and accepted. There are many interesting and wonderful people living near us, and I am able to walk to just about everywhere I need to go. Every day brings new experiences for me, from vegetarian friendly restaurants to great new local shops. Maybe I’ll finally unpack the six huge moving boxes that I’ve been storing in the closet.”

—compiled by *Gwen Orel*



# Montclair Theater Project: Summer stock, meet pop up



*Miranda Ferris Jones and Vanessa Dunleavy perform their comedic musical song cycle at the opening party for the Montclair Film Theater Project, Saturday night, Sept. 15. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

**By GWEN OREL**

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Most arts organizations follow a school-year schedule: they are active from September to June; drop off a bit in late December, and are quiet as anything in the summer.

That's one reason summer stock theater was once common everywhere. "Stock" usually referred to classic musicals and comedies, with an occasional mystery thrown in. The plays were rehearsed in a week or two and put up quickly. The company would rehearse during the day, while performing at night.

Not too many summer stock companies exist these days, outside of some Shakespeare theaters (which are not exactly stock, but perform on a similar schedule).

As a result, school-based actors are often twiddling their thumbs in the summer.

It was while sitting in a student-directed concert in June 2017 by Montclair's School of Visual and Performing Arts (SVPA) that Betsy Harris had a brainstorm.

Why not have some kind of summer stock in Montclair? Montclair has so many arts organizations: Montclair Film, Jazz House Kids, Peak Performances, Opera Theatre of Montclair, Montclair Orchestra.

Why not create something to take advantage of the home-grown talent, and help SVPA grads gain more professional experience?

The brand new Montclair Theater Project aims to do just that.

Harris described the project to Montclair Local as a cross between summer stock and pop-up theater.

The organization is so new, it does not yet have a website, let alone an org chart. It held its first event, for an invited audience, at [Montclair Film's Cinema505](#) this past Saturday, Sept. 15.

Vanessa Dunleavy and Miranda Ferris Jones performed their as-yet-untitled musical/cabaret about best friends growing up, growing apart and growing back together, with musical accompaniment from SVPA Showcase Director Dave Maglione.

Neither woman is a graduate of SVPA, but Ferris Jones lives in Montclair and gives vocal coaching to SVPA students.

Montclair Film President and Chairman of the Board Bob Feinberg pointed out that the Montclair Theater Project presentation was the first on Cinema505's new floor, after the flood of Aug. 11 damaged the old one.

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[READ: MONTCLAIR CONTINUES CLEANING UP FROM FLOODS](#)

[READ: SVPA'S 'CHICAGO: HIGH SCHOOL EDITION IS A SIGN OF THE TIMES'](#)

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Many Montclair arts stakeholders were present: Opera Theatre of Montclair General Director Mia Riker-Norrie. Montclair Orchestra President André Weker. Playwright/director Chris Hart, son of Moss Hart (now a Verona resident).

And several SVPA students and parents.

Harris said that the goal is to mix student talent with the professional talent in town. "I see so many kids go through SVPA, and they come back, and want to see what their colleagues are doing," she said.



*BETSY HARRIS*

Deb Garrison, a SVPA parent supporter, said they decided to do Ferris Jones' and Dunleavy's show after they saw a living-room presentation of the piece.

"It kind of fell into our laps," said Harris. "Montclair Theater Project can be more than just a summer stock theater. I know there are a lot of programs for elementary kids, middle school kids, high school kids. But what about the young artist who comes home from college?"

There will also be student-written plays and musicals, Garrison said.

The untitled show has its own Montclair origins: Ferris Jones said that it began after she moved to Montclair.

After the reading, Harris asked her if they wanted to be involved in this event.

Olivia Champeau, a freshman in MHS, and one of Ferris Jones' students, is in the dance company at SVPA.

"We want this festival to happen, selfishly," Dunleavy said, "so we can both be involved in it."

Champeau nodded.



## 'Hansel and Gretel' goes traditional at Opera Theatre of Montclair



*Chloé Novoa (10), Owen Smith (10), and Natalie Smith (13) play three frozen Gingerbread children. KATE ALBRIGHT/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

### *Hansel and Gretel*

*By Engelbert Humperdinck (sung in English)*

*Presented by Opera Theatre of Montclair*

*Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 22, 23, 29, 30, 4 p.m.*

*Central Presbyterian Church, 46 Park St.*

[Operamontclair.org](http://Operamontclair.org)

**By GWEN OREL**

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One witch has a green wig and a creepy air.

The other is jolly, with lipstick not quite on his lips (this witch is played by a man in drag), a happy grandma everybody loves, except that when she's hungry, she might eat you.

Each actor in Opera Theatre of Montclair's (OTM) production of "Hansel and Gretel" has been encouraged to find their inner witch.

Both portrayals are consistent with the story, said Stage Director Stacey Canterbury,



*Tai Collins as the Gingerbread Witch. KATE ALBRIGHT/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

who also plays The Gingerbread Witch with green hair in Cast A.

Tai Collins plays The Gingerbread Witch in Cast B.

Humperdinck's opera is not a children's story per se — adults play the major roles — but children will enjoy it, said OTM's General Director Mia Riker-Norrie.

"We had a table in a sidewalk sale and people ask, 'Are there adult singers?'"

"Yes, this is a fully professional production, with kids in it. It's very sophisticated music, but because of the theme, it's appropriate to bring children to it," said Riker-Norrie.

Actually, there are quite a few children in the production, more than 20, who play Gingerbread Children the witch has enchanted to make up the walls of her house, and who dance in the ballet. Christine Rauschenbach-Nevill, who plays The Sandman in Cast B, is one of the child wranglers.



*Angels played by children watch over sleeping Hansel and Gretel. COURTESY HEATHER BOBECK*

At one point Riker-Norrie considered having the production allude to current events, with children in cages on the border and a witch with a blonde comb-over, but in the end decided to allow the audience to draw its own parallels.

This production, with its vivid colors and magical moments, is a "relief and a release" from the news, she said.

## **FINDING FAMILY**

Being separated from a parent is a primal fear, and many fairy tales draw on it, Riker-Norrie said.

The production came together with just a few weeks of rehearsal. Central Presbyterian Church is used by Bnai Keshet for the high holidays, so OTM has had to work around that as well.

As is usual for opera, there are two casts, so that singers can rest their voices in between productions.

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[READ: REVIEW; OPERA THEATRE OF MONTCLAIR'S 'LA CENERENTOLA' BRINGS REAL MAGIC](#)

Though most people know the story of Hansel and Gretel and the witch, the opera adds a few touches specific to Humperdinck: the mother doesn't kick out the children because they are starving, but loses her temper and immediately feels remorseful. She and the father go to look for them. The imprisoned children, as well as a corps de ballet of children-angels who watch over Hansel and Gretel, are new. So are The Sandman, who puts the siblings to sleep, and the Dew Fairy, who wakes them up.



STACEY CANTERBURY

Humperdinck wrote a lot of the staging into the score, even some of the specific steps of the witch's dance, Climie said.

Allyson Carvajal, the mother in Cast B, said the music itself has a lot of German traditions. "I hear a lot of influences, some Mahler," she said.

Collins agreed that the music is tricky. While his approach to the witch is comical, he decided to eschew vulgar rewritings of the lyrics to keep his witch a lovable ghoul. Having the witch played by a man has been common for about 40 years, he said.

In some productions, there are parallels between the mother and the witch, sometimes even played by the same performer.

But, Carvajal said, there is a scene with the mother praying desperately. If you take the parallel too far, "it loses the humanity that comes in that aria," she said.

"The kids are happy when they see their mother and father at the end of the show, not going 'I might want to stay in the woods,'" Climie said with a laugh.

If losing family is a primal fear, finding them again will bring about a sense of wonder and relief, Riker-Norrie said.

The score is beautiful, with harp, tympani and brass; there will be a 22-piece orchestra accompanying OTM.

"It's uplifting," she said. "When you see the angels watching over these children, who are abandoned in the wood, holy cow! It just hits you.

"We're going traditional, and it's just beautiful."



Andrea Howland as Hansel and Heather Bobeck as Gretel. KATE ALBRIGHT/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL



## Looking forward to 2018: Montclairites predict their (cultural) futures



Janette Lallier and Mia Riker-Norrie as the evil stepsisters Tisbe and Clorinda Opera Theatre of Montclair production of Rossini's 'La Cenerentola,' (Cinderella), in the United Way Theatre, at the Saturday afternoon performance, Sept. 16. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL

We asked local cultural and community figures what they were looking forward to in 2018: 1) something they are doing, and 2) something others are doing. What about you, Montclair? What are you looking forward to here in town that you're doing, and that you're not? Write to us at [culture@montclairlocal.news](mailto:culture@montclairlocal.news) and we may print it in a coming issue!

**Pheeroan Aklaflf, executive director, Seed Artists:** 1) I am looking forward to our 2018 Percussion Festival in a yet to be determined performance space in Montclair. 2) I am looking forward to serendipitously meet the honorable Jeh Johnson in some artistic setting of Montclair.

**Jonathan Alter, author, journalist, political analyst:** 1) I've teamed up with fellow Montclairians Steve McCarthy and John Block, who made the acclaimed 2015 documentary "The One Who Got Away" about a Glenfield student convicted of murder. The three of us are producing and directing a new HBO documentary called "DEADLINE ARTISTS: Fifty Years on the Streets with Jimmy Breslin and Pete Hamill" that will air in 2018. 2) My fondest hope for the arts in Montclair in 2018 is that someone buys the Bellevue Theater and keeps it

as a movie house. Keep your fingers crossed and let the owner, Jesse Sayegh, know you will be deeply disappointed if the building is converted for other use.



*The company move their feet at a dance rehearsal for the Harmony concert. Director Maggie Borgen, center; designer Maria Linietsky, front left; Saroyah Price, Olivia North-Crotty, and Janae Walker-Rabb, back right. COURTESY MAGGIE BORGEN.*

**Maggie Borgen, MHS student and director, In Harmony Montclair:** 1) In Harmony Montclair plans to organize more small events (in addition to our annual Harmony Concert), to give teens a creative outlet throughout the year, such as how we held two performances at the Montclair Pop-Up this past month. In addition, we hope to expand our outreach so that more teens will have the opportunity to share and develop their performance and organizational skills while raising funds to help local charities. 2) 2018 promises to bring many opportunities for teens to connect with the broader arts community in Montclair. Programs through groups such as the Montclair Literary Festival and Montclair Film allow local teens to contribute to the community by sharing their talents. I look forward to seeing further creative connections between youth, nonprofits, and local businesses. I believe that the New Year has the potential to give teens a greater voice in the community through its many creative outlets.

**Clark Scott Carmichael, actor:** 1) I'm looking forward to auditioning. I'm also watching



CLARK SCOTT CARMICHAEL

for the release of Martin Scorsese's film "The Irishman." I played the pilot and one scene with Robert De Niro. I'm curious to see if I will make it to the screen.) 2) I love the Montclair Jazz Festival in August. Melissa Walker and Christian McBride have put together a wonderful event and training program for kids in the area. Full disclosure — my son has played with them for the last few years. It's a real summertime treat in Nishuane Park.

**Israel Cronk, director, Montclair BID:** 1) We are excited to host our this Annual Downtown Oktoberfest this year, Sept 22, 2018. We welcomed 4,000+ visitors this year to Lackawanna Plaza! What will 2018 bring?! 2) I'm also excited to partner up with MFEE on their "Life After High School" conference on Jan. 6 at Montclair State University. I will be speaking to kids about fostering good relationships, building connections and staying true to their passions.

**Fran DePalma-Iozzi, president, Montclair Women's Club:** 1) At least twice a month: a program open to the public for a low fee... authors, musicians, concerts, is held at the Montclair Womens Club, 82 Union St. A Big Band Bash will be held April 20, and a follow-up to the recent Opioid Awareness Conference will be held in the spring. WomanSONG CHORUS will perform at the May 3 "Free First Thursday" at the Montclair Art Museum. 2) Mia Riker-Norrie and the Opera Theatre of Montclair.

**Dagmara Dominczyk, actress; author, “The Lullaby of Polish Girls”:** 1) 2017 was a “heavy” year, and although there were lovely personal moments, I found the atmosphere – for good reason – to be tightly wound. So I’m looking forward to “unspooling.” To allowing myself to relax. I want to finish writing my second novel. I’m looking forward to taking part in both the Montclair Literary and Montclair Film festivals. I believe that the arts make the world go round and want to use them – whether via writing, acting or teaching theatre – as an outlet and a reminder that there is still goodness in the world. And family time. Always family time.

**Richard Fulco, writer, “There Is no end to this Slope”:** 1) Presently, I’ve been working toward completing a novel. Its working title is “Fade Into Obscurity.” 2) In 2018, I’m looking forward to reading Susan Tepper’s “Monte Carlo Days and Nights.” Susan is a well-established writer and Montclair resident.



DOROTHEA BENTON FRANK. ©Debbie Zammit

**Dorothea Benton Frank, author, “Same Beach, Next Year,” “All the Single Ladies,” “The Last Original Wife” and others:** 1) I’m looking forward to a trip with my sweet husband to the Galápagos Islands. 2) I’m looking forward to seeing Harvey Weinstein’s mug shot. Ha!

**Ghana Imani Hylton, poet, activist, social media /event management; producer, Adinkra House:** 1) I’m \*really\* amped about the Montclair Literary Festival the weekend of St. Patrick’s Day. I’ll be moderating a panel on Art as Activism particularly around poetry as a medium for social justice. 2) I can’t wait to be a part of the MFEE Life After High School program Jan. 6 where I moderate a panel of highlighted speakers and their best take-away advice. It’s open to any Montclair kid in eighth through twelfth grade and it’s free! Basically everything I believe in; the arts, social justice, education, community & creativity converge in my favorite town in 2018! I’m SO looking forward to it!

**Peter Jacobs, visual artist:** 1) I will be entering my 14th year of The Collage Journal. 4,653 uninterrupted days. 2) Watch for Ai Weiwei’s documentary film “Human Flow” coming out in January.

**Elizabeth Smith Jacobs, artist and educator:** 1) offering an assortment of mixed media workshops in collaboration with the Creativity Caravan. 2) When in the Baltimore/DC area, checking out my favorite museum, the American Visionary Art Museum, near the inner harbor in Baltimore. The museum is dedicated to showing outsider art and does a very unique kinetic sculpture race, which will take place on May 6th this year.



“What Is this Aliveness in Me?” by Jennifer Levine. COURTESY JENNIFER LEVINE

**Jennifer Levine, artist:** 1) Art Park Montclair — developing a movable art park with a puppet theatre for Montclair residents to enjoy summer 2018. In my studio, I am working with breast cancer survivors creating collage paintings to honor their choice not to reconstruct. 2) Shout out to Amy and Maya from The Creativity Caravan for supporting local artists with a gallery, inspiration, and great food at openings!

**Ann Lippel, chair, Montclair Senior Citizens Advisory Committee (SCAC):** 1) Taking the high quality and free M.I.L.L. (Montclair Institute for Lifelong Learning ) classes, part of the Township's Lifelong Montclair Aging in Place initiative and funded by Partners for Health. 2) Attending one of the Opera Theater of Montclair performances.

**Elaine Molinaro, president, Montclair Arts Alliance; artistic director, Culture Connection Theatre:**

1) directing theater that makes connections between people and



*Elaine Molinaro introduces the Montclair Arts Festival. NEIL GRABOWSKY/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

opens minds. 2) organizing more actively with Alicia Garza, Tamika Mallory, Bob Bland and others to continue the fight for a just society.

**Steven M. Moore, author, "Rembrandt Angel":** 1) Giving a talk on publishing and my writing, featuring "Rembrandt's Angel," at the Montclair Women's Club on Jan. 26. 2) Catching as many musical events as possible at Montclair State University—these kids are fantastic!

**Diane Moser, pianist; leader, Diane Moser's Composers Big Band:** 1) I have a new CD releasing March 1st, with a new trio. The CD is called "Diane Moser-Birdsongs," and it features Anton Denner on flute and piccolo, Ken Filiano on bass and yours truly on piano. 2) Looking forward to a new year of exciting events and a percussion festival produced by Seed Artists, here in Montclair.

**Erin Carlisle Norton, artistic director, female-centric dance company The Moving Architects:** 1) "The Recollection" is the newest work developed through the ongoing collaboration between myself and visual artist gwen charles. "The Recollection" uses dance, multi-media projections, and original music to explore the tenuous and distorted threads between memory and reality. This will be the third live performance work they have collaborated on together, alongside "Americana" which was performed in April in Manhattan and Jersey City, and "America Dawn" which premiered in Brooklyn in November after beginning the project through a creative residency at Wilson College (PA) in August. The work is set to premiere in Montclair in 2018. 2) I am interested in the ongoing visual arts projects of gwen charles. Her studio is in Montclair and her work was recently featured on banners throughout Montclair as part of the Studio Montclair banner series.



*BARD will perform at Trend on Saturday, Aug. 12. COURTESY JAMIE PAGLIARO.*

**Jamie Pagliaro, BARD, St. James Players:** 1) I am super pumped to play an evening of Renaissance Rock music with BARD at Tierney's on Feb. 3 at 8:30 p.m.!! A portion of the proceeds will go to support the St. James Players. 2) I am psyched to see my friend and fellow SJP member Gary Koseyan in Theatre League Of Clifton's dinner theatre production of "Trouble at the Tropicabana" in late Feb/early March. Who doesn't love

a fun night of dinner theatre!?!)

**Greg Pason, founder and organizer, Montclair Make Music Day:** 1) I look forward to



*Rostafa plays at Waxing the City on  
Montclair Make Music Day.  
NEIL GRABOWSKY/FOR MONTCLAIR  
LOCAL*

more grassroots arts and music projects in Montclair in 2018, including a full Make Music weekend in June. In June we will have events starting on June 21st and extending into the weekend of the 23rd. We've built so many new partnerships with local businesses and organizations, especially the newly founded Indie Arts Montclair! 2) I also love the work being done by Montclair Arts Alliance, the volunteers working to bring the pollinator garden and cultural events in Crane Park and everything being done to promote bicycling by Bike&Walk Montclair and VELO. Let's bring more community focused art and music to our community next year and be more inclusive. Art is an integral part of daily life. We need to create opportunities for participation in art and cultural activities.

**Catherine Platt, co-director, Montclair Literary Festival:** 1) I'm looking forward to



*Owen Duncan reads his winning poem.  
COURTESY CANDY COOPER.*

the second Montclair Literary Festival, March 15-18, presented by Succeed2gether. Highlights will include our high-energy poetry slam, this year to include Montclair High School as well as Middle School students; our headline event at 7 pm on March 16 when author Tom Perrotta will speak with Patrick Wilson and Dagmara Dominczyk about transferring fiction to film and television; and panels on wide-ranging topics from sexual harassment to rock and roll biography. Our popular children's program is back as well, and art and literature workshops at MAM. 2) In other events, I'm looking forward to hearing Garth Hallberg and Estep Nagy in conversation about crafting fiction at the Open Book/Open Mind event at Montclair Public Library on January 28th, and to finding out which authors Watchung Booksellers will bring to town in 2018 — always a wide and interesting range of speakers!

**Gail Prusslin, promotions and publicity, The Outpost in the Burbs:** 1) the first show of the new year at Outpost in the Burbs on Jan. 5th: Light of Day Foundation North Jersey "Songwriters in the Round" benefit concert and 2) Montclair Film Festival '70's Mixtape Dance Party with The Loser's Lounge on Feb. 25th!

**Mia Riker-Norrie, general director, Opera Theatre of Montclair:** 1) Opera Theatre of Montclair is looking forward to expanding its family-friendly offerings in 2018 by producing Humperdinck's Hansel and Gretel. 2) I'm looking forward to supporting the young artists at the Cali School of Music as they perform

Britten's The Rape of Lucretia on Jan. 27 and 28.

**Nancy Star, author, "Sisters One, Two, Three":** 1) I'm excited to be reading at the Half-way There series on Jan. 22nd! 2) And I'm excited for the second annual Montclair Literary Festival!

**Bruce Tyler, Black Lace Blues:** 1) Well...I am working on my drumming technique and reviewing some of my old drumming ideas! Also..writing some material with my band Black Lace Blues. Looking forward to putting together a bead exhibit at the new Trend Gallery. 2) My harmonica player in my band is playing with the legendary Michael Powers at Terra Blues in New York.



*Dancers Madelyn Eltringham and Sharie Taluba perform Montclair Lauren Connelly's "We Know Not What Next Comes." Connelly is the awardee of "Dance on the Lawn's Emerging New Jersey Choreographer Award." More than a dozen dance companies perform on the lawn of St. Luke's Episcopal Church on South Fullerton Avenue for the annual Dance on the Lawn Festival, Sat., Sept. 9.*  
ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL

**Charmaine Warren, producer/artistic director, Dance on the Lawn:** 1) Celebrating our fifth year of presenting free dance performances to our community and beyond! 2) Looking forward to seeing what and supporting the very new Montclair Arts Alliance in their second year.



## Montclair Arts Alliance Festival of Visual and Performing Arts kicks off!



*The wedding brings the finale and a standing ovation for the Opera Theatre of Montclair production of Rossini's 'La Cenerentola,' (Cinderella), in the United Way Theatre, at the Saturday afternoon performance, Sept. 16.*

**By GRACE WILLIAMS**

*For Montclair Local*

While it may already be known for its film and jazz festivals, Montclair is now poised to add fine arts to its lineup for those in the know.

From Wednesday, Nov. 29 to Saturday, Dec. 2, the newly official Montclair Arts Alliance will treat attendees to hidden gems in the local arts community through the Montclair Arts Festival 2017. This four-day arts extravaganza calls upon local talent within the fine arts, with 24 organizations (as of this writing) showing work in theater, visual arts, music, opera, and dance.

The latest schedule and more information can be found at [montclairartsalliance.org](http://montclairartsalliance.org), and tickets are available at [montclairartsfestival.brownpapertickets.com](http://montclairartsfestival.brownpapertickets.com). Information is also up on Montclair Arts Alliance's Facebook page.

The different genres are organized on different days: Wednesday is devoted primarily to visual arts and jazz; Thursday to theater; Friday to rock and R&B; Saturday, during the day, to performances and art for young audiences; and Saturday night to dance.



*Freespace Dance. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*

The festival has two-pronged purpose: 1) to showcase local artists and arts organizations and 2) to establish the United Way Theater, 60 South Fullerton Ave., as a performance venue and a future arts center, The center will be able to provide non-profit arts organizations affordable, rentable, shared performance and arts spaces.



*Art from the Creativity Caravan. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*

Although the alliance itself has been in the works for several years, the festival had to be planned quickly and on a shoestring. Along with a few grants, the organization's non-profit, or 501(c)(3), status have just recently come through, organizers said, and as such, the festival, which needs to take place in 2017 had to be planned swiftly. But, despite the time constraints, the response has been promising, with dozens of artists, bands and companies signing up to participate in the event.

The kickoff starts on Nov. 29, with the opening of the art exhibit "Improvisations," curated by local artist Joyce Korotkin.

“The Montclair Arts Alliance was created to help all regional and local performance groups to perform,” Korotkin said. Events like this typically take six months to a year to plan, but the alliance is making it work in a shorter window: “This is talent that needed a space to be displayed.”

Korotkin’s portion of the show will feature curated works from 12 to 15 visual artists showing painting, sculpture and art installations. Featured artists include internationally known artists, as well as newcomers and emerging artists.

A way to streamline organization and event space is especially needed by emerging artists, and the United Way has been



*Vanguard Theatre Company. COURTESY  
MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*

helpful in that regard, said Alliance President Elaine Molinaro.

The social justice element of the event comes through United Way’s ALICE program, which specifically aims to foster the arts for people who are employed but face income restraints.

“Montclair is a wonderful town for the arts,” Molinaro said. “But space is expensive.” And for most artists struggling to cover their daily expenses, finding extra money for their own place is out of reach. In partnering with each other and working with the United Way, artists in the alliance will utilize a space that once served as a formal theater and now caters to revolving arts genres, from paints to plays. In addition, the space believes the theater must have at one time served in a formal capacity given the layout. Its features such as a projection booth and dressing rooms lend credence to the theory.

In addition to producing the festival overall, Molinaro is directing readings of two short plays with her company, Culture Connection Theatre, by the Montclair Local’s Culture Editor Gwen Orel.

Having put on productions locally, members of the alliance like Mia Riker-Norrie know that it’s hard for productions to land



*MIA RIKER-NORRIE*

in an actual home-base. Riker-Norrie, who serves as vice president of the alliance, also runs Opera Theatre Montclair. Although local churches and schools have generously donated their space for past productions, in Norrie’s line of work acoustics are paramount and shows take up a lot of space. Moreover, a school or church’s first priority is clearly to its students and parishioners. And having to tear sets down over the weekends, only to rebuild them for the upcoming shows is an exercise in frustration, she said.

## **DRAWING PEOPLE IN**

From a production standpoint, the space, which played home to a recent production of “Cinderella,” serves as a highly necessary breath of fresh air. “The festival will serve as a good intro to opera,” Riker-Norrie said. “It will draw people in to appreciate the arts scene [here].” Her company will perform the children’s version of “The Magic Flute,” which it performed at Van Vleck House & Gardens this past summer.

Molinaro said the buzz about the festival is in the air: when she was handing out flyers at the farmer’s market, one person told her they had already picked one up at a restaurant. “Word of mouth is important,” she said.

In a nod to the family aspect thriving in the community, the festival will also provide plenty of opportunities for young learners. On Saturday, there will be day-long workshops and performances specifically for children. Young participants will be exposed to family friendly performances including theater, music, dance, drumming, drama, opera, visual arts and interactive art.

Saturday evening will usher in dance performances by seven local companies including Freespace Dance.

Before that, though, on Friday, music will turn up the heat and draw in the adults. Although there will be music peppered



*MADLOM. Courtesy Montclair Arts Alliance*

throughout the festival, Friday will serve as the time for a large portion Montclair’s musical talents to make themselves known.

Four R&B and rock bands, including Tierney’s Tavern regulars The Fabulous Flemtones, are expected to turn up the heat a little. Bruce Tyler has been a longstanding member of the local arts and festivals scene. Tyler, whose band Black Lace Blues is slated for a Friday show, said there has been a need for strength in numbers where arts are concerned in this community.

“It’s a good thing for Montclair to have a festival like this that is multidisciplinary,” Tyler said. “Montclair is an arts community and we need to show it.”

*INFO:*

*Montclair Arts Festival 2017*

*WEDNESDAY, NOV. 29*

*VISUAL ARTS/JAZZ*

*6 p.m.: Art gallery opening, Violetta Norrie, harp*

*19 artists: Ananda Bell; Mona Brody; Willie Cole; Lori Field; Samuel Iztueta; Elizabeth Jacobs; Peter Jacobs; Jennifer T. Ley; Fernando Mariscal; Deborrah Markette; Indigo Nelson; Karen Neilsen-Fried; Sharon Pitts; Yana Rodin; Ela Shah; Madeleine St. Jacques; Marilyn Stevenson; Jon Taner; Philemona Williamson*

8 p.m.: three jazz companies including:  
Scott Robinson/Seed Artists  
Jazz House Kids Organ Ambassadors Ensemble  
Trio Mia Jazz

THURSDAY, NOV. 30

THEATER

6:15 p.m.: Culture Connection Theater  
6:50 p.m. Sugar Mama Productions  
7 p.m.: UCC Players  
7:30 p.m.: Vanguard Theater Company  
8 p.m.: Theatre 167

FRIDAY, DEC. 1

ROCK/R&B

6 p.m.: QWERT  
7 p.m.: Meg Beattie Music  
8 p.m.: Fabulous Flemtones  
9 p.m.: Black Lace Blues

SATURDAY, DEC. 1 DAYTIME

FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

11 a.m.- 6 p.m.

Pushcart Players  
Montclair Early Music  
Montclair Dance Collective  
Premiere Dance Theatre Workshop Kids

MADLOM

Opera Theatre of Montclair  
A Mid-Summer's Dreaming Theatre Company  
Interactive Arts by Indie Arts Montclair (IAM and Creativity Caravan  
6-8 p.m. Jennifer Levine's Soul Paintings

SATURDAY, DEC. 2 EVENING

DANCE

8-9:30 p.m.: six dance companies, including:  
Padierna Dance Project  
Premiere Dance Ensemble  
DanceWorks & Company  
Kyle Marshall Choreography  
Freespace Dance  
Umoja Dance Company

The United Way Theater, 60 South Fullerton Ave.

[Montclairartsfestival.brownpapertickets.com](http://Montclairartsfestival.brownpapertickets.com)

[montclairartsalliance.org](http://montclairartsalliance.org)

\$20.00 for one-day festival admission

\$30.00 for a two-day festival pass (save \$10)

\$40.00 for a three-day festival pass (save \$20)  
\$50.00 for an all festival 4-day pass (save \$30)  
\$10.00 for children 12 and under

*Schedule is evolving and subject to change*



*Black Lace Blues. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*



*Umoja. COURTESY MONTCLAIR ARTS ALLIANCE*



## Local organizations join to form Montclair Arts Alliance



*Elaine Molinaro is president of the newly formed Montclair Arts Alliance. LINDA MOSS/STAFF*

**By LINDA MOSS**

*moss@montclairlocal.news*

Local arts groups have decided to go ahead and band together to form the Montclair Arts Alliance, which will be hosting its kickoff event later this month and is looking for a permanent venue for its members to share.

Led by Elaine Molinaro, the alliance has incorporated as a nonprofit, a 501(c)3, creating an arts-service organization for Montclair-area arts organizations and artists.

The alliance's goals and mandates will go well beyond the functions of the now-defunct Montclair Arts Council, whose operations essentially came to an end in 2010 after the Township Council cut off its funding in a belt-tightening measure. For example, the new alliance is in talks with the United Way of Northern New Jersey to use its auditorium on South Fullerton Avenue as an arts center, space that local arts groups can share and use for their performances and events, Molinaro said.

[Earlier this year Molinaro](#), artistic director of Montclair-based Culture Connection Theater, held several "visioning" meetings with representatives of local arts organizations to discuss creating a group that will find not only find a space for its members to share but also pool resources to promote Montclair as an arts destination; act as an advocate for its members; and create a comprehensive calendar of events taking place in the township.

Those are tasks that are beyond the scope of the municipal Montclair Arts Advisory Committee, a volunteer group that Molinaro chairs and that serves as a liaison between the local arts community and the council. The arts committee had proposed doing a township-wide arts festival to the council, but it was clear that funds would have to be raised to produce such an event - something the committee of volunteers couldn't do but an arts nonprofit could, Molinaro said.

The Montclair alliance has formed a board, with Molinaro as president. The other board members are vice president Mia Riker-Norrie, general director and founder of the Opera Theatre of Montclair; treasurer Ian Finnell, a member of the Montclair Arts Advisory Committee; secretary Kathryn Osborne of the Union Congregational Players; and member at-large Julienne Pape of Montclair Early Music.



*The Montclair Arts Alliance is looking for a permanent venue that its members can share for their events.*

The Montclair Arts Alliance is modeled after groups such as ART New York (the Alliance of Resident Theatres) in New York City, the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance and the South Jersey Cultural Alliance, according to Molinaro.

The alliance is just starting its effort to recruit members.

"We're still working on getting a PayPal button on our website," Molinaro said.

The alliance first big event and priority is the arts festival from Nov. 29 to Dec. 2, where more than 25 groups have lined up to participate, according to Molinaro.

But the alliance has already sprung into action to help local arts groups. The Westminster Arts Center at Bloomfield College recently, and suddenly, announced that it was shutting down for a year in January, putting arts groups who used it as a venue in the lurch, Molinaro said.

Molinaro heard about what happened through a group that was taking part in the festival, and arranged an emergency conference call last week with some of the groups who had scheduled their seasons at Westminster to try to help them find new venues. The 4th Wall Theatre, a group that started in Montclair and was in the township for many years, most recently was performing at Westminster.

That's part of the arts alliance's role, to share resources and "have an active network of artists," Molinaro said.

Once the festival is over, going into next year, the alliance's big goal is to find performance space, possibly at the United Way building. That's where the arts festival is being held.

"We are in talks with the United Way about forming an arts center there in the auditorium at some point if we have the funders, come on - corporate funders, and foundation funders and individual and government," Molinaro said. "And we could renovate that space. It's in need of some renovations."

The alliance held two open houses in October at the United Way for arts groups to show them the space and talk about the alliance, Molinaro said.

"We've been in discussions with members of the arts community as well as local leaders to learn about the needs of the community," United Way CEO John Franklin said in an email. "We are still in the early phases of exploring the possibilities, but we are excited by the opportunity to help address a growing need for performance space in Montclair."

It was [Molinaro who put Riker-Norrie in contact with the United Way](#) this fall when St. Luke's Episcopal Church suddenly told the opera company that it no longer use space at the hours of worship for its performances.

One of the alliance's goals is to create a comprehensive online listing of arts events in Montclair, and it is talking to web developers about that project, Molinaro said.

"That's a big project," she said.

The alliance has established a sliding scale, based on the budget of an arts organization, for its membership fees, Molinaro said.

For Montclair-based nonprofit organizations and arts associations [dues](#) for next year are: \$150 for those with budgets less than \$100,000; \$200 for those with budgets from \$100,000 to \$249,999; \$250 for those with budgets of \$250,000 and \$499,999; \$300 for those with budgets of \$500,000 to \$999,999; and \$350 for those

with budgets of \$1 million or more.

Non-Montclair based nonprofits can become affiliate members for \$200; business affiliates such as colleges, universities and arts-related businesses must pay \$300; and individuals can join for a \$50 fee.



## Council votes to lower Grove St. speed limit to 30 mph



*The Township Council debated reducing the speed limit on Grove Street at its meeting Tuesday night. LINDA MOSS/STAFF*

**By LINDA MOSS**

*moss@montclairlocal.news*

In a narrow vote after much debate, the Township Council introduced an ordinance Tuesday night that will reduce the speed limit on Grove Street, where a pedestrian was struck and killed this summer, to 30 mph from 35 mph.

At the local governing body's meeting the vote was 4-3 in favor of the ordinance, with Mayor Robert Jackson, Deputy Mayor Robin Schlager, at-Large Councilman Bob Russo and Fourth Ward Councilwoman Renee Baskerville in favor of the measure. First Ward Councilman Bill Hurlock, Third Ward Councilman Sean Spiller and at-large Councilman Rich McMahon voted against it.

"I'm doing what I believe in ... but this is not going to solve the problem unless we enforce it and we put a lot of signage up," Russo said.

If the resolution is approved by the council on its second reading, it will then be sent to Essex County officials for their sign-off, since Grove Street is a county road. At the council meeting Acting Township Manager Tim Stafford said that in his experience, when a municipality passes such as ordinance it is usually approved by county officials.

Council members agree that there is no one silver-bullet solution to making Grove Street safer, that it will take a combination of efforts, including stepped-up enforcement, pedestrian-safety education and traffic-calming measures. But the group divided about whether lowering the speed limit is a step that will really make drivers slow down. Those in favor of the 30 mph said at least it's an immediate action that can be taken in advance of other measures.

"Time is of the essence ... Maybe it won't work, maybe it won't help things," Schlager said. "But it's something we can do now, where we can get signs up in the next four weeks. And I really feel like it's something that we should do, we should try."

She agreed that Spiller, McMahon and Hurlock had made some valid points in opposition to the speed-limit reduction on Grove Street.

"My concern overall with this is I am not convinced that changing a signed speed limit is going to affect outcomes in terms of people changing behavior ... what has been shown to work is that people, drivers need to feel like the street is more narrow," Spiller said. "They need to feel that they need to go slower. They need to have things placed — like street bump-outs, other tools — things that have been shown to lower people's speed."

He added that poor lighting on Grove Street has to be addressed, adding that he's convinced that the energy-efficient lights that PSE&G installed in town are dimmer than their predecessors.

"I would absolutely agree that lighting on that street is key," Spiller said. "All of us who have driven down there ... we know how dark it is and how difficult it is to see someone crossing."

But Spiller said he met with PSE&G officials last year about the lighting of Montclair's streets, and changing or adding lights is a time-consuming effort that the township would have to foot the bill for.

At its Oct. 3 meeting the council heard roughly two dozen residents plead for a speed reduction on Grove Street. Several of those who spoke had been hit and injured in accidents while crossing Grove Street, and several mentioned the June death of Mary DeFilippis, a 70-year-old resident who sustained fatal injuries on that roadway.

At this week's meeting McMahon cited statistics that indicated that more enforcement of traffic laws was addressing some of the safety issues on Grove Street. He said that at this time last year there were 38 accidents on Grove, compared to only 25 this year. And 26 traffic summonses were issued for Grove Street

last year, with that doubling to 55 this year, according to McMahon.

Hurlock made reference to a report that recommended that the Grove Street speed limit be dropped. But one paragraph in that study said, “however, a reduction in speed limit alone may not result in significantly reduced vehicle speeds,” adding that “a combination of engineering, enforcement and education” are also part of the mix, according to Hurlock.

Before Tuesday’s vote Baskerville asked the council to amend the ordinance to also include reducing the speed limit on Valley Road to 30 mph, which she said was better than addressing issues of pedestrian safety and speeding in a “very piecemeal” manner around the township. But several council members said they didn’t have any data on traffic issues on Valley Road to address it now, and wanted to keep the proposed ordinance remain strictly focused on Grove Street.



## Montclair Opera chief up for appointment to township arts committee



MIA RIKER-NORRIE

Mia Riker-Norrie, the founder and general manager of Opera Theatre of Montclair, is up to be appointed to the township Arts Advisory Committee.

The Township Council's agenda for Tuesday's meeting has a resolution to name Riker-Norrie to the committee.

If the council approves the resolution, Riker-Norrie's appointment will be effective immediately and end Dec. 31, 2018.



## Montclair Local review: Opera Theatre of Montclair's 'La Cenerentola' brings real magic



*Cornelia Lotito as Cinderella forgives her evil stepfamily in Saturday, Sept. 16's performance of "La Cenerentola." ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

*'La Cenerentola' ('Cinderella')*  
*By Gioachino Rossini*

*Presented by Opera Theatre  
of Montclair*

*Friday, Sept. 22, 8 p.m.*  
*Saturday, Sept. 23, 4 p.m.*

The United Way auditorium  
60 South Fullerton Ave.

[operamontclair.org](http://operamontclair.org)  
973-202-7849

**By GWEN OREL**

[orel@montclairlocal.news](mailto:orel@montclairlocal.news)

*Note: All cast members refer to the Saturday night casts. As is the norm in opera, there are two casts who alternate performances.*

There are big smiles in the audience during the Opera Theatre of Montclair production of Rossini's "La Cenerentola" ("Cinderella").

Yes, there's a happy ending coming. And it's a happy story.

But it's the sheer silly fun of what OTM has done that puts joy in the air like the aroma of something wonderful baking.

It's impossible not to smile as the pure sounds of the singers wash over you, after they hit the high ceilings of the United



*Fernando Palomeque conducts the orchestra for The Opera Theatre of Montclair production of Rossini's 'La Cenerentola,' (Cinderella), in the United Way Theatre, at the Saturday afternoon performance, Sept. 16. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

Way auditorium; or not to feel the excitement as the 20-piece orchestra tunes up, then keeps sweet, rhythmic pace, thanks to the sure conducting of Fernando Palomeque; or to laugh at some of the 1920s silent-movie conventions inventively put in place by Stage Director Nicolas Tamagna.



*Eleanor Rose of Glen Ridge, 4, already an opera lover, according to her mother, in Cinderella costume watches Cinderella with rapt attention. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

And then there is the charm of the 20 or so small children sitting on the floor, who can barely contain themselves when the carriage horses enter through the house.

Try not smiling. Your mouth will want to move. Yep, that's a smile.

This is the way all opera should be: fun, formal (well, semi-), gorgeous, glorious. This is how children should first experience it: there's no pressure. If they get bored, they can quietly play with their dolls. Playwright George Bernard Shaw learned to love opera by playing on the floor of his family's box.

And the music is wonderful. Rossini, the composer of "The Barber of Seville," writes happy, melodic tunes, some with fast patter, many with harmony.

Congratulations to United Way for making its theater available to OTM: it's the best space so far for the peripatetic opera company.

It's a minor thing, but it's also lovely to see homemade baked goods at intermission, and juice boxes for the children. Everything speaks of a production presented with love and care. You'll have more sheer fun here than at the Met — for one thing, the cast are often right in front of you, hamming it up and delivering those exquisite notes. Hearing an operatic voice come from a person a foot away makes the gift so much more apparent than when it's high up on a faraway stage. It's a thrill.

Rossini's fairy tale here is more a masquerade than a story of magic (there are, in fact, no fairies): the prince (Alexey



*Gustavo Morales as Dandini, the valet in disguise as the prince, in The Opera Theatre of Montclair production of Rossini's 'La Cenerentola,' (Cinderella), in the United Way Theatre, at the Saturday afternoon performance, Sept. 16. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

Kukharskiy) sends his valet Dandini (Gustavo Morales), disguised as the prince, to the home of Don Magnifico (the evil stepfather, Nate Mattingly) to check out the daughters living there.

We know he's the "fake prince" because during the overture, the silent film director, who also plays the prince's tutor Alidoro (Cody Müller), holds signs over their heads: "fake prince," "real prince."

Evil stepsisters Clorinda (Mia Riker-Norrie) and Tisbe (Janette Lallier) fawn on the "prince," and are mean to pure-hearted Cenerentola (Cornelia Lotito).

Alidoro, pretending to be a beggar, meets Cenerentola, who is kind to him.

You know the rest. Rossini was an 18th-century Enlightenment writer, so there is no pumpkin nor mice, and the slipper here is a matching bracelet.

But there is smart, smart whimsy. Tamagna has the "film within a play" organize its film set during the orchestral overture



*Cody Muller is the movie director, rolling film, and also plays Alidoro. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

, so it's really two overtures at once. Joyce Korotkin's set design includes a clever antique film camera prop, and plants that come on to signify "castle" just as they did in old movies.

Alidoro (a posturing, smirking, utterly delightful Müller, whose booming bass shocks coming from his slender frame) takes out a tape measure for Cenerentola before whisking her away in his carriage.

"I didn't expect that," someone in the audience said quietly.

David Gillam's costumes included flapper headbands and argyle vests.

The supertitles are projected in a scroll design on the wall.



*General Director Mia Riker-Norrie plays a mugging hammy silent film star, and sister Clorinda. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

At one point, Clorinda, played by Riker-Norrie, sings an aria of self-pity, then breaks into a tap dance. This is the first time



*Nate Mattingly as the evil stepfather Don Magnifico threatens Cenerentola. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

that Riker-Norrie, OTM's founder and general director, has cast herself since the company's first full production in 2015. We hope she won't make us wait so long again: her face is perfect for silent movie makeup and mugging, and her voice soars with purity and precision. As Don Magnifico, Mattingly is delicious (if a little young), with a powerful bass-baritone voice. He shines in a drunken self-congratulatory song.

Morales, a baritone, plays a comical Dandini, who is having fun playing "prince." He also perfectly handles Rossini's tricky runs.

But without a strong Cinderella the production would falter.

Fortunately Lotito's sweet face is matched by her clear, strong soprano. You could hear sighs in the audience when she shaped a strong note that lingered.



*Horses prance in time to the music to take Cinderella to the ball. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

And then there are those horses, prancing in time, to take the princess to the ball. Just thinking about them raises a smile.

There's also Alidoro, at the top of Act II, who blows bubbles on the children in the audience, and the cast onstage.

Smiles for everyone. The cast, and everyone else.



*Cody Muller as the Prince's philosopher/ magician in The Opera Theatre of Montclair production of Rossini's 'La Cenerentola,' (Cinderella), blows bubbles on everyone. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*