Sacramento State presents laughter at the opera

When people hear the word “opera” they usually think of very serious, somber musical presentations. But there are comedy operas, and Sacramento State’s Opera Theatre will present three of them in May.

Mark Bucci’s Sweet Betsy from Pike, Samuel Barber’s A Hand of Bridge, and Seymour Barab’s A Game of Chance will be presented at 8 p.m. Friday, May 3, and Saturday, May 4, in the Music Recital Hall. They vary in length from 10 to 40 minutes, and all are in English.

“These particular pieces are interesting, fun, accessible and newer, in terms of the opera world, from the 1950s and ’60s,” says Omari Tau, the University’s director of Opera Theatre.

In A Hand of Bridge, the vocals reveal the thoughts of the players, each of whom has a particular issue they want to share. One has a fantasy of being a rich debaucher.

Junior Kyle Sullivan plays David in that opera. “David is an introvert, until the very end when he explains his inner desires,” says Sullivan. “He’s very kinky.”

Sweet Betsy from Pike is based on the folk song, but in this version Betsy is still in love with her former paramour, Dirty Dan.

Sophomore Taylor Haines plays Betsy. “She’s kind of crazy in her movements,” says Haines. “We’ve been referencing Lucille Ball, just to give you an idea of what she’s like.”

A Game of Chance is about three knitters sitting on a park bench when a “Representative” grants each of them their fondest dream. But as usual, a wish come true is not always what you want.

This is Tau’s first year directing the University’s opera players. Prior to this he spent nine years on the road with national tours of Disney’s The Lion King, in which he played the hyena Banzai, one of the lion Scar’s henchmen.

Tau decided to put down roots in Sacramento and soon found out his current job was available.
“It’s been a great opportunity to get to know the art and the talent here, because there is such great talent,” he says. “I’m a Sacramento native, and returning home has been a dream fulfilled.”

Tickets for the three one-act operas are $10 general admission, $7 seniors and $5 for students, and are available at the University Ticket Office, (916) 278-4323, or www.csus.edu/sfsc/ticketoffice/.

For more information visit the Music Department at www.csus.edu/music or call (916) 278-5191. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

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