

O F F I C I A L S T A T E M E N T

December 15, 2014

OPERA SAN JOSÉ FOUNDER IRENE DALIS DEAD AT 89

We are deeply saddened that Irene Dalis has passed away after 89 wonderful years. Irene's brilliance, energy and passion for opera enriched our lives and the countless others that she touched. Irene had an international career that spanned more than three decades including 274 performances with the Metropolitan Opera company.

Irene was revered for her vocal richness and fiery dramatic presence. Among her most notable roles were Amneris in Verdi's *Aida*, the female title role in Saint-Saëns' *Samson and Delilah*, and Richard Strauss' Clytemnestra in *Elektra* and the Nurse in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.

After retiring from the Met in 1976, Irene returned to her native California, where she became Professor of Music at San José State University.

In 1984 Irene formed Opera San José, the only residential company in the United States allowing artists to perform principal roles in the company's four annual productions.

"We don't import artists at Opera San José, we export artists," Irene said proudly in an interview with KQED. In fact, many of the principal artists from Opera San Jose have gone on to perform around the world.

Irene retired from Opera San José in 2014 but not before hand-selecting Larry Hancock to take over the reins as General Director of Opera San José.

“I was a direct report to Irene Dalis since my graduate-school days, when she asked me to be her teaching assistant in 1979. I have remained by her side since that time, and was her first hire when she founded Opera San José. We were harnessed to the same plow for more than 30 years as we, David Rohrbaugh, and many, many others, created and managed this company. She groomed me, step-by-step, to take over the direction of the company should the day arrive when she would or could no longer direct our activities. She was unique in this world, and her love and wisdom and drive have changed the lives of hundreds of artists as well as opera lovers. She leaves a void that will not be filled.” Hancock said.

Irene Dalis leaves behind a legacy of beautiful performances, mentorship and an opera company that enhances the rich, cultural atmosphere of this community.

Opera San José is planning a celebration of Irene’s extraordinary life that will take place in the Spring of 2015. If you would like to share your thoughts, memories and condolences in the interim, you can simply post them **here**.

No words can adequately express our sadness at Irene’s death or our gratitude for the opportunity to work with her. We will honor her memory by dedicating ourselves to continuing the work she loved so much.

Memorial donations may be made to Opera San José **online**, by calling us at 408.638.8701, or by sending your gift to: Opera San José, 2149 Paragon Drive, San José, CA 95131

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