

# Favorites in visual arts and classical music, opera

We keep a close eye on fine arts and classical music in the Syracuse region, thanks to reviewers Linda Loomis and Katherine Rushworth. We asked them to share their favorites from 2014.

**Katherine Rushworth, visual arts:** When one looks back at the local visual arts scene for 2014, it's fair to say it was one of the quieter years on record. The Everson Museum of Art, with two important shows canceled, was barely on the radar due to staffing and budgetary constraints.

So, when I think about what shows stuck with me this year, two come quickly to my mind — Jeffrey Mayer's "Fashion After Five: The Clothes and Culture of the Cocktail Hour" at Onondaga Historical Association and "Lyrical Simplicity: An Exhibition of Miriam Nelson's Sculpture" at Stone Quarry Hill Art Park. They are such different types of shows, I felt they both should be recognized.

Mayer has a distinct flair for combining costume, couture and decorative arts and did it all in this show as he traced the evolution of the cocktail dress from the Roaring 1920s through 2014. The exhibition captured the social tones of the times and not only explored the signifi-



The "Fashion After Five" exhibit at Onondaga Historical Association. (David Lassman / dlassman@syracuse.com)

cance of the cocktail dress on the international social scene, but tied it right back to that of good ole Syracuse. It was a fun, fanciful and informative exhibition that demonstrated creative collaboration between Syracuse University and OHA.

The Nelson show at SQHAP was a wonderful example of fine art, philanthropy and community engagement. The 94-year-old artist donated seven of her painted steel sculptures to the park and was properly thanked with a one-person retrospective exhibition in the park's gallery. SQHAP then paid it forward by providing

the Village of Cazenovia with one of Nelson's works via an extended loan. The piece is now installed outdoors, near the entrance to the Village. Fine art work and a great example of creative synergy and community spirit.

**Linda Loomis, classical music and opera:** Symphoria's "Colleagues Across Borders," with guest pianist Alexander Kobrin, won my heart. Kobrin and the local musicians sparkled in response to Case Scaglione's elegant conducting Oct. 18 in Crouse-Hinds Concert Theater. Every element of the performance combined to make this

masterworks series program memorable.

Brilliant energy seemed to radiate from the stage with the opening folk dances, which made immediately apparent the positive rapport between musicians and conductor. That same level of energy was sustained for Dvorak's dark seventh symphony in D minor, which highlighted Symphoria's artistic growth since its Phoenix-like rise throughout the past year.

Cementing the exceptional quality of this performance was the exquisite collaboration among conductor, piano soloist and Symphoria musicians on Brahms's gigantic, emotive, four-movement "Piano Concerto No. 2," which shone a figurative spotlight on orchestra soloists and ensembles along with the virtuosic Kobrin. The piece built in intensity and passion to stir the emotions of the audience, which offered, after the final notes, that mystical moment of silence — that corporate indrawn breath of wonder — before shouting and applauding wildly for the gift of a magical night at the symphony.

Puccini's "Madame Butterfly," generated deep and lingering emotions when I saw it in the Glimmerglass Festival summer presenta-

tion at Alice Busch Theater in Cooperstown. Under Francesca Zambello's direction, with Joseph Colaneri conducting the extraordinary orchestra, "Butterfly" reached the pinnacle of operatic success, delivering tenderness, beauty and pathos in every scene.

Yunah Lee's powerful soprano revealed all the dualities of character in the complex title role: She was innocent, yet worldly enough to provide for her son; she was fragile, yet strong enough to embrace her fate after learning of Pinkerton's betrayal. Dinyar Vania played the culturally ignorant Pinkerton, and together with the rest of the cast, they sang Puccini to

perfection.

Zambello's production was visually elegant, with pure, lush colors and stunning, magical effects, such as a fairylike deluge of floating flower petals before Cio-Cio-San's final act.

Through drama, stagecraft, passion and music Puccini's story of one couple's love and betrayal raises larger issues of imperialism, oppression, privilege, and discrimination. It is in the artistic presentation of these themes and the emotional responses they elicit that the Glimmerglass production excelled.

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