UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

November 27, 2019
Andrea Estrada

La Nochebuena

Ever wonder how the poinsettia became a symbol of the holiday season? Composer, librettist and pianist Evan Mack answers that question in “Lucinda y las Flores de la Nochebuena,” a children’s opera based on a Mexican folk tale.

Students from Hollister, La Patera and Isla Vista elementary schools will have an opportunity to hear the story when the Department of Music’s Opera Outreach Program performs the children’s opera in Karl Geiringer Hall, Tuesday through Sunday, Dec. 3-6.

In addition, a community performance, which is free and open to the public, will take place Sunday, Dec. 8, also in Geiringer Hall.

For many of the youngsters, these performances will mark their first opera experience. Written in a combination of English and Spanish, “Lucinda y las Flores de la Nochebuena” conveys a universal message of courage, hope and transformation that transcends religious and cultural lines and empowers students to identify and celebrate their inner strengths.

"I remember seeing my first opera at the age of 17,” recalled Isabel Bayrakdarian, an associate professor in the music department’s voice program, and director of the Opera Outreach production. “Something inside of me just lit up. I always liked to sing, but never imagined myself on stage, until I saw a live opera performance and felt I could relate to the characters on stage. Even though I had just started my biomedical engineering studies, I knew that music was going to be as essential to

me as oxygen.

“I believe there are unique talents in all of us,” she continued. “Sometimes all that is needed is a little creative spark to activate destiny. I hope this opera production provides the artistic catalyst that will inspire school-age children to be the creative thinkers and trailblazing musicians of tomorrow.”

This project is supported by the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center Collaborative Arts Teaching Program Award that Bayrakdarian received last fall. The award focuses on community-engaged visual and performing art projects housed within UC Santa Barbara courses, in this case, Bayrakdarian’s Opera Outreach course, which is offered annually.

The performance for Hollister Elementary School will take place at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 3. Students at La Patera Elementary School will be treated to the opera at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4, and Isla Vista Elementary school students will see it at 11 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 5 and 10 a.m. Friday, Dec. 6. The Dec. 3-6 performances are not open to the general public.

More information about the event can be found at music.ucsb.edu.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.