

Four Seasons

# BREEZE

Magazine

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## HANDBELL CHOIR

What a fun evening we had at our “Americana/Folk” tunes Handbell concert on June 6. Thanks to all who came, donated, and participated. We are taking a summer break and then we will start practicing for our Dec. 12 Christmas concert. If interested in joining on a regular basis OR being willing to substitute on occasion, please let me know by calling (303) 903-6850 or email [kathryn.buck@comcast.net](mailto:kathryn.buck@comcast.net). ~ **Kathie Sundstrom**



## OPERA CLUB

The August meeting of the Four Seasons Opera Club will be on Friday, Aug. 9 at 6 pm in The Lodge Theater. We will stream *Thaïs* by Jules Massenet.

The recording is from Jan. 8, 2009, at the Metropolitan Opera featuring Renée Fleming in the title role and Thomas Hampson as Athanaël in a “traditional” staging.



*Renée Fleming as Thaïs*

*Thaïs* was first performed in March 16, 1894, at the Opéra Comique in Paris. *Thaïs* was the consort of Ptolemy, who traveled with Alexander the Great on his military campaigns. It is proposed that she was Alexander’s lover as well and that she chided Alexander to burn Persepolis. She later became a courtesan in Alexandria who, in a mid-life crisis, seeks to renew her relationship with God. When a Cenobitic monk comes to convert her, he finds that she had already converted. He guides her to a convent where she attains sainthood.

Massenet’s opera focuses on conversion. The story begins with her, a devotee of Venus and sensual love. The monk Athanaël, who knew her as a youth, vows to claim her for God. He challenges her to repent at a party thrown by her current lover. She publicly rejects the challenge, but later, alone in her home, she sings the

“Mirror Aria” in which she pleads Venus for eternal beauty. Athanaël visits, she agrees to his challenge, and we hear the famous “Méditation” during which her conversion takes place. It is a stunningly beautiful violin solo performed by the concert master standing spot-lit in the orchestra pit. The profundity of this passage is akin to the ringing of bells in Mass – signaling the mystery of transubstantiation. In the morning they depart to the convent. Athanaël leaves *Thaïs* in the care of the nuns and returns to his cenobium, but is troubled with internal unrest. He realizes that he is in love and returns to the convent to plead with *Thaïs* to renounce God and resume her devotion to Venus and to himself. But *Thaïs*’ sainthood is complete; she dies in grace and ascends to heaven.

This is the third club presentation featuring Renée Fleming as a woman who achieves redemption through her own dignity or personal conversion. The first was as the water nymph *Rusalka*. The second was last month’s *Violetta* in *La Traviata*. And now *Thaïs*. Next month we will visit with Mimi in Puccini’s *La Bohème*. ~ **Harvey Toyama**, [yukito@yukito.net](mailto:yukito@yukito.net), (951) 524-3765

## CLASSICAL MUSIC CLUB

We are classical music lovers with an interest in sharing our love of, knowledge about, and interest in classical music. We meet on the second Thursday of each month at 7 pm in The Lodge Theater. We listen to and watch musical selections on the big screen. Each month we focus on a particular work or several selections of one composer. We also discuss current musical performances in the area. We welcome new members. Contact Steve Benoff at [steve.benoff@verizon.net](mailto:steve.benoff@verizon.net) or (310) 413-4896. ~ **Steve Benoff**

## FOUR SEASONS SINGERS

Four Seasons Singers started rehearsing for the Holiday Show, the first weekend in December. We will be singing some beloved carols and some new holiday music.

If you would like to join the Singers, would like to be included in my email list, or if you have questions about the Four Seasons Singers, call (951) 797-3466 or email me at [bawasco@dc.rr.com](mailto:bawasco@dc.rr.com). ~ **Barbara Wasco**

