

The Lanza Legend

Continues-49



1951 Photoplay Gold Medal Award Winners
Mario Lanza & Doris Day

Founders: Damon Lanza & Bob Dolfi

Honorary President: Anthony Kearns

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Antonio D'Alessandro (FOML) - Aaron Caruso - Frank Tenaglia - Dominic Mantuano

Lanza Legend: Marlene Dolfi - Lindsay Perigo

Lanza Legend, P.O. Box 6742, San Pedro, CA. 90732 – Renewals Due On Mario's Birthday, January 31st

December Edition 2011

Damon Lanza Productions

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Kearns Catch-Up: Linz Gets The Latest From Our Honorary President, by Lindsay Perigo



Since we last spoke your career has really taken off. (That's what happens when one appears in *Lanza Legend*!) Among the many high points, you appeared in an Irish production of *Don Giovanni*. *Opera Now* reviewed your *Il Mio Tesoro* as "beautifully spun ... a moment of still beauty in the turmoil." I've often thought that aria must be a huge test of one's lung capacity and breath control with all those long florid passages ... is it? Are there any special tricks you employ to get through it?



Breath control plays a huge role in the art of opera and singing in

general. Mario Lanza had superb breath control, diction and expression, and he was one of the greatest tenors in the 20th century! The key to singing "Il Mio Tesoro" is pacing yourself, not to push the sound so you have enough in the tank to finish. It requires a lot of focus and a balance of air and sound. Unfortunately I don't have any special tricks to share, except the old-fashioned formula of hard work and practice – and working with some fantastic mentors and coaches.

And you're right, the past year was very good to me ... from Lexington [Kentucky] to Little Rock to Los Angeles ... singing for governors, ex-presidents and prime ministers, and most of all, the fans and friends who support my work and many wonderful causes! I also was on tour for my new PBS special, *Hallelujah Broadway*. The year kicked off with a new opera for me, and the chance to perform the lead tenor role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Opera Naples in Florida. From there, it was off to the races!

You had another hit playing Alfredo in *Die Fledermaus*. One review spoke of your "excellent comedic timing and on-stage charm and passion." I gather you enjoyed that role too?

Yes, I really enjoyed my role as Alfred! *Die Fledermaus* is a rare UPLIFTING opera – lighthearted and full of joy! I also love Strauss' magnificent overtures, the music is brilliant and you can just imagine the waltzing when you close your eyes and

listen to it. Besides that, it was a fantastic experience working alongside the other singers and musicians; they were all first-rate. The opera company itself is based in a small town in the majestic Rocky Mountains, which is very scenic. Performing the role of an ITALIAN tenor was also great fun, and singing in English added a different dimension which was enjoyable on one level for the audience. The operetta was stage-set and very well done.

Have you by any chance heard the 1963 recording of *Fledermaus* featuring Anna Moffo and George London, the bass-baritone who toured with Lanza in the late forties? There's an Irish tenor in that too: Sergi O'Franchi ...

I believe you mean the Italian tenor, Sergio Franchi! Yes, he had a spectacular voice. Many legendary singers have performed in *Die Fledermaus* over the years. Pavarotti, for example, performed in the operetta in 1990 with the Royal Opera House of Covent Garden with Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne.

Then there was your performance at the Ronald Reagan Centennial in New Orleans. The iconic President would have approved your being there to sing *Danny Boy*, I'm sure. Can you describe the moment for us?

Danny Boy has so many layers of meaning for me ... and for so many people, Irish and non- Irish. It moves me every time I sing it because it evokes so many emotions, of a loved one leaving who may never return. *Danny Boy* holds special meaning for me because it is the song that I sang over the phone to win the semi-finals [and later won the final round] of *Ireland's Search for a Tenor*. It's the song that brought me to the dance, so to speak... and I never grow tired of singing it. I was delighted to sing *Danny Boy* in honor of the late President Ronald Reagan last June in one of my favorite cities, New Orleans, during his Centennial Celebration. Michael Reagan, Pres. Reagan's eldest son, told me that *Danny Boy* was his father's favorite song. I've always admired Pres. Reagan, as well as Pres. John F. Kennedy, for celebrating America's deep cultural history with Ireland. Reagan was a great American President; he made a very important trip to Ireland in the 80s and was proud of his Irish heritage. I sang at his funeral in 2004 in Washington, DC so we have a certain history, on one level. I also was honored to sing *Danny Boy* with the late Senator Ted Kennedy, a memory I will always cherish.

[Photo courtesy John Jacks Photography with Kirsten Fedewa & Assoc.]

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by Lindsay Perigo

And I gather you've been starring again at the New Zealand Embassy in Washington, in honour of Viet Nam vets?

Yes, I was proud to perform last year at the first-ever Embassy gala for the USOs Wounded Warrior Program and an organization called ThanksUSA, that provides educational scholarships for military families. This year, we joined forces with the ONE campaign [co-founded by U2's Bono] for a benefit for USO and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. It's always an honor for me to recognize and support America's armed forces, who risk their lives so that we can enjoy peace and stability as we go about our lives. Besides the event at New Zealand's embassy, I teamed up with Gov. Bob McDonnell (VA), a governor of Irish descent and also a veteran, for ThanksUSA in February of this year – and a wonderful group called "Mooremart" that supports the troops based in New Hampshire, among other events.

You must be getting to know our former Prime Minister, Ambassador Moore, and his wife Yvonne quite well by now!

Yes, they seem to be wonderful people and I admire Ambassador Moore for stepping up to the plate last year for the USO. He's now stepped up twice, by



holding this second event, which has deepened my respect for him all the more. New Zealand and Ireland have such great historical ties

and I remember so fondly performing in New Zealand with the Tenors years ago. I was also pleased to dedicate a beautiful love song called *Pokarekare Ana* – written around the time of World War One -- to New Zealand's All-Blacks rugby team just a few days before they won the world championship. Ireland was my first choice of course, but I was pleased to root for the New Zealand team and I am glad they made it across the finish line.

What of The Irish Tenors as a group? Do the others mind that you keep getting proclaimed the best Irish tenor?!

You'd have to ask them ... but I don't think so. Finbar Wright and Ronan Tynan are each well known in their own right ... We have great chemistry on stage and each of us have enjoyed a fair amount of success in

our solo careers. Finbar was well known in Ireland before he joined the Tenors and Ronan Tynan will be joining us again, which is always great fun. We're looking forward to getting back together for a special Christmas reunion tour -- 15-concerts -- in December, which we're getting ready for now. It's been a great run, and I'm glad for the opportunity to perform alongside them and hopefully we can make some good music for the fans.

Obviously it's a very exciting period for you. What's coming up? When may we expect the Kearns' Greatest Hits double-CD?

Well, I'm preparing for the upcoming tour in December with the Tenors, of course, and then the opera *Faust* in February. But besides that, stay tuned for the many exciting projects that are lining up for next year! Already it promises to be even better than 2011. Regarding another recording, I'm fortunate to have made about a dozen CDs, but I expect I'll be back in the studio soon!

Anthony, congratulations on your ongoing success, and thanks for joining us at again in LanzaLegend.

Thanks for supporting me, and for your great work in preserving and promoting the legendary work of Mario Lanza.

[Photo courtesy Alan Schlaife Photography in conjunction with Kirsten Fedewa & Assoc. L.L.C.]



Attend Anthony's performances and let him know you're a Lanza fan. You won't be disappointed!

The Irish Tenors remaining 2011 schedule:

- Saturday, Dec. 10 in Memphis Tennessee
- Sunday, Dec. 11 in Hartford, CO
- Tuesday, Dec. 13 in Avon Park, FL
- Wednesday, Dec. 14 in Fort Meyers, FL
- Friday, Dec. 16 in Melbourne, FL
- Saturday, Dec. 17 in Hollywood, FL
- Sunday, Dec. 18 in Sarasota, FL
- Monday, Dec. 19 in Clearwater, FL
- Wednesday, Dec. 21 in New Brunswick, NJ
- Thursday, Dec. 22 in Baltimore, MD

For information, visit www.theirishtenors.com.

Anthony will also be performing the title role in *Faust* with Opera Naples, Florida, in February 24 & 26, 2012. Check his sites for more details: www.anthonypearns.com, www.anthonypearns.net & www.anthonypearnsmusic.com