



2023 Nomination Form

Application deadline: Friday, February 24 by 5 p.m.

DELIVER TO: City Hall, 101 N. Main St., Winston-Salem,
Marketing & Communications Department, Suite 336

OR MAIL TO: City of Winston-Salem,
Marketing & Communications
Department
P.O. Box 2511
Winston-Salem, NC 27102

Nominee's Stage Name: Jake Gardner Given Name: Jake Gardner
Address at Time of Death: 4954 West Rd. Kernersville State: NC
Dates of Residency: 2011 to: present (ex: 2000-2010)

Category: Music Visual Arts Dance Motion Pictures
 Theater Television Writing Radio

Criteria:

- The nominee(s) exhibited sustained excellence in his or her field for at least five years.
- The nominee(s) made distinguished contributions to the community and civic-oriented participation.
- The nominee(s) is deceased (must provide copy of death certificate or obituary).
- The nominee(s) was a resident of Winston-Salem for at least five years.
- The nominee(s) made a significant contribution to the arts or entertainment industry in one or more of the following areas: music, dance, theater, writing, visual arts, motion pictures, television, or radio.

A "significant" contribution would be iconic in terms of renown and the impact on the artistic disciplines or popular culture.

Application to Include:

- Attach nominee's performance/accomplishment biography which must include at least 5 years of accomplishments in the arts, culture, or entertainment field.
- Attach a list of nominee's civic/community involvement.
- Attach a copy of nominee's death certificate or obituary.

Sponsor Name: Mariedith Appanaitis (Piedmont Opera)
Address: 636 Holly Avenue
City: Winston-Salem State: NC Zip Code: 27101
Email: mappanaitis@piedmontopera.org
Phone: Home: 336 725 7101 Cell: 336 403 5481
Signature: [Signature] Date: 2/21/2023

City of Winston-Salem
ATTN: Marketing and Communications
Suite 336
101 N. Main Street
Winston-Salem, NC 27102



February 22, 2023

Dear Nomination Committee,

Piedmont Opera proudly submits bass-baritone Jake Gardner for consideration for the 2023 Winston-Salem Arts, Culture and Entertainment Memorial Walk of Fame.

Jake sang in opera houses all over the country and around the world. Having sung a decade as principal baritone with Oper der Stadt Köln under the baton of James Conlon, his long and distinguished career has included performances with such notable companies as Wiener Volksopera, Dresden's Semper Oper, Glyndebourne Festival, De Nederlandse Opera, Edinburgh Festival as well as Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera and a host of excellent American regional companies.

Career highlights include a world tour and film of Peter Brook's *Le Tragédie de Carmen*, a landmark production of *Così fan Tutte* with Trevor Nunn and Simon Rattle at the Glyndebourne Festival, and the world premiere of William Bolcom's *A Wedding* directed by Robert Altman commemorating Lyric Opera of Chicago's 50th Anniversary season.

When he and his wife (soprano Jill Gardner) weren't globe-trotting, you would find them in Forsyth County. In an interview, Jake said, "We first picked Winston-Salem because there is a family connection (Jill was born in Tobaccoville), but ultimately it was because it is a community with a true identity. There is a "here," here. Winston-Salem is not trying to be anything but itself. This city has great roots in the arts and continues to foster that. When we perform here, we are part of a community where you see your audience at the grocery store. That connection in terms of art is fantastic. Experiencing these masterworks live together – as artists and audience – really elevates the performances and brings the work alive.

Jake and Jill have both performed numerous times with Piedmont Opera. We could only afford them because they love Piedmont Opera and performing in front of a home audience.

At the end of his career, Jake used his talent to coach rising, young opera singers across the county. Jill said he enjoyed witnessing young talents blossom before his eyes as he shared his knowledge to help hone their vocal and stage craft.

Please let me know if you have additional questions. We hope to see Jake's love of opera and this area reflected in the walk of fame!


Mariedith Appanaitis
Piedmont Opera Marketing Manager

Piedmont Opera, Inc. • 636 Holly Avenue • Winston-Salem, NC 27101
336.725.7101 • PiedmontOpera.org

*Piedmont Opera receives support from The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County,
The Arts Council of North Carolina and the Piedmont Triad community.*

NOV 11, 2021

Obituary: Bass-Baritone Jake Gardner Dies at 73

By Francisco Salazar



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Bass-baritone Jake Gardner has died at the age of 73.

Throughout his career, Gardner was sought-after at major theaters and held a position as principal baritone with Oper der Stadt Köln for a decade. From there, he went on to perform internationally

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Florida Grand Opera, among others.

Some of his career highlights included a world tour and film of Peter Brook's "Le Tragédie de Carmen," a historical production of "Cosi fan Tutte" with Trevor Nunn and Simon Rattle at the Glyndebourne Festival, and the world premiere of William Bolcom's "A Wedding" directed by Robert Altman commemorating Lyric Opera of Chicago's 50th Anniversary season.

His operatic repertoire was extensive and included works by Verdi, Tchaikovsky, Weber, Puccini, Donizetti, Massenet, Wagner, and Rossini, among others.

Outside of his operatic work, he was also a great interpreter of operetta and musical theater. He appeared in "Annie Get Your Gun" and "The Music Man" with the Glimmerglass Festival, "The Merry Widow" with Los Angeles Opera, "A Little Night Music" with Hawai'i Opera Theater, and "Die Fledermaus" and "HMS Pinafore" with Virginia Opera. He was particularly well-known for his portrayal of Judge Turpin in "Sweeney Todd" which he performed at the Virginia Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Mill City Summer Opera, and Eugene Opera.

Recently, Gardner was performing at regional houses such as the Indianapolis Opera where he world premiered a production of Richard Auldon Clark's and Kurt Vonnegut's "Happy Birthday Wanda June," and celebrated his 100th role performance as the Hermit in "Der Freischütz" for Virginia Opera.

He celebrated the Anchorage Opera's 55th Anniversary in a gala concert and was a frequent guest of Opera San Antonio, Piedmont Opera, Eugen Opera, Hawai'i Opera, and Florida Grand Opera.

During a 2017-18 production of Virginia Opera's "La Fanciulla del West," [OperaWire](#) noted that Gardner's Ashby "was sung and acted with authority."

Gardner is survived by his wife Jill Gardner, a soprano with which he performed constantly with.



Jake Gardner sings "Ha piu forte sapore" from Puccini's TOSCA





Jake Gardner

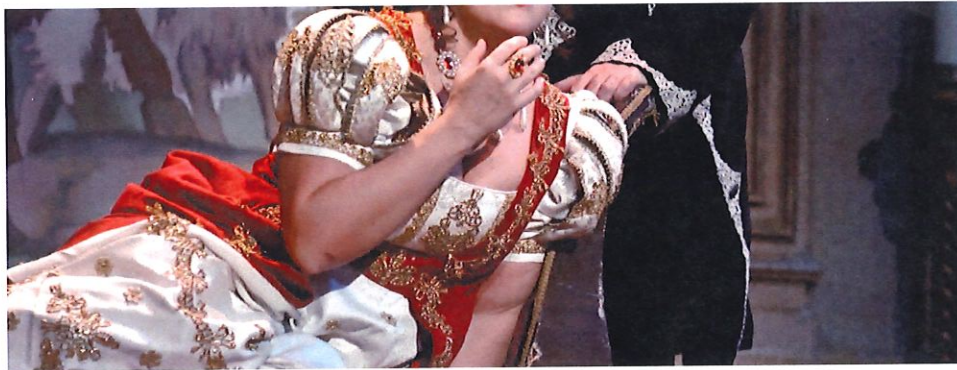
Boasting a career which includes performances with major opera companies and orchestras throughout North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, bass-baritone Jake Gardner remains one of the opera world's most sought-after singing actors. Noted North American engagements from the past few seasons include Doc in Bernstein's *A Quiet Place* with New York City Opera, Betto in *Gianni Schicchi* and Hortensio in *La fille du*

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Theatre, Buffalo Bill Cody in Annie Get Your Gun, Ronaldo Cabral in Later That same Evening, and Jupiter in Offenbach's Orpheus in the Underworld at Glimmerglass Opera, as well as Horace Tabor in Central City Opera's The Ballad of Baby Doe. In the current 2011-2012 season and beyond, engagements include Sharpless in Madama Butterfly at the Arizona Opera, The Mayor in John Musto's The Inspector at Boston Lyric Opera, Ariadne auf Naxos at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Mayor Shinn in The Music Man and The Judge in Lost in the Stars at Glimmerglass Opera, Germont in La Traviata with Opera Omaha and a return to Houston Grand Opera in 2015. March 2012

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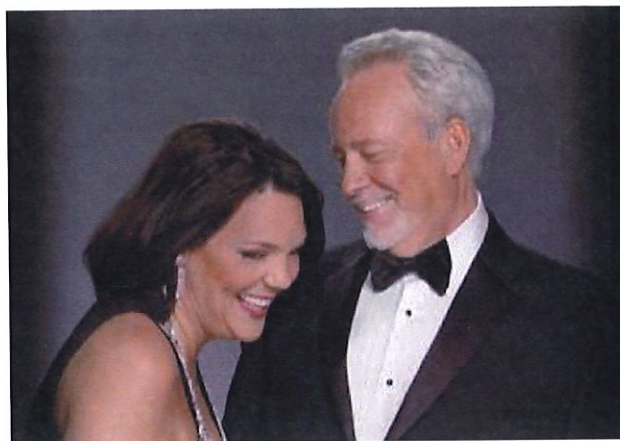
Townies



October 27, 2016 October 28, 2016

A Conversation with Jill and Jake Gardner of The Piedmont Opera

Jill loves to garden about as much as she loves the opera. But if you ask me, it is her husband Jake that she loves most.



(c) Jill Bowen Gardner

It is evident as we sit together in a beautiful room at the home offices of **The Piedmont Opera** (<http://www.piedmontopera.org>). A home that was once in fact an actual home and recently gifted to The Piedmont Opera by a generous supporter when the company found themselves without a place of their own. As I sat there in the Victorian house with two of the three vibrant leads of The Piedmont Opera's latest production, *Tosca* (**which opens Friday night**) (<http://www.piedmontopera.org/event/stephen-sondheims-little-night-music/>) I could not help but feel the passion that filled this space and this couple.

As I shared with you last week **here** (<https://towniesws.com/2016/10/17/why-i-have-fallen-for-the-opera-sponsored/>), I have no experience with the opera. But I'm curious and invested in learning. Both of these characteristics serve you well when you are with the Gardners, an incredibly dynamic and talented duo who celebrated fourteen years of marriage this year and boast hundreds of professional performances between them. They are candid and charismatic. Thoughtful and direct. They delight in teaching. Jake comes to the conversation with more than forty years as a professional opera singer living and working all over the world. Jill just entered her second decade as a professional and will hit her 50th performance as Floria Tosca this weekend as they perform at the Stevens Center. In 2011 they moved from New York to live in Kernersville to be closer to Jill's family. Together they found a cherished home base here and shared with me how the personal connection found in a community like this allows art to come alive.

When did the Opera become a part of your lives?

[Jill] I grew up in Tobaccolville and my mom said that when I came into the world it was clear that music is what I needed to do. She was extremely instrumental in getting me into music and I learned how to read music before I could read words. I saw my first opera at Reynolds Auditorium when Norman Johnson was running the company. The Opera was *Carmen*. I didn't realize at the time that that experience would set me on this path of becoming a professional opera singer.

In high school I received a full scholarship to study piano at Centenary College in Louisiana and decided to minor in voice. That is when I discovered it – *my voice*. I started entering vocal competitions and would win. Everyone kept saying "why don't you want to be a singer?" I remember saying, "because I'm here to be a pianist." It was at the end of that degree that I had this 'Come to Jesus' moment and realized it was important for me to follow this path.

[Jake] My family wasn't particularly musical, but during that time in life everyone played some sort of instrument. It's just what you did and I chose the trumpet. I saw my first opera at my home company, Tri-Cities Opera in Binghamton, New York when I was 18. I think I had some of the normal prejudices about opera at that time – the language barriers and such – but I was in love with a young lady and her mother had bought us tickets to go. It turned out to be this amazing thing for me. It was a flash and it was over before I even realized it. I was so fascinated by so many aspects of the performance. That is why I always encourage everyone to at least try the opera once. It's not for everybody. You can open the door and some people will go "what?" – and others will go "wow"! That 'wow' is what happened for me. Eventually opera focused me in a way that nothing else had done before. I went from a C-student to an A-student. It was a path I stumbled upon and it was an intense falling in love.



(c) Jake Gardner

You have lived and traveled all over the world. Why do you choose to live in Winston-Salem?

[Jake] We first picked Winston-Salem because there is a family connection (Jill's) but ultimately it was because it is a community with a true identity. There is a "here", here. Winston-Salem is not trying to be anything but itself. This city has great roots in the arts and continues to foster that. When we perform here we are part of a community where you see your audience at the grocery store. That connection in terms of art is fantastic. Experiencing these masterworks live together – as artists and audience – really elevates the performances and brings the work alive.

[Jill] Winston-Salem is special given it was where I was raised and saw my first opera. The Piedmont Opera is now my home company. When I was a young artist at **GlimmerGlass** (<https://glimmerglass.org>) in 2005 to 2006, Jaime (Albritten) hired me to sing my first MiMi (from La Boheme by Italian composer, Puccini). It was such a special experience for me and Puccini's heroines have since become a signature role for me. The quality of productions that this company promotes is incredible and this community is what continues to draw us back home to perform.

You both have performed these roles in Tosca together before. Tell me a bit about this particular production and how you approach your characters in new ways.

[**Jake**] This will be my fourth time as Scarpia. I feel that each production is not like starting over from scratch but a reinvention because the material itself is just so good and dense. That is why Puccini's work is still here and remains relevant. As I address the material again I am in a different place in my life and relate to things differently. It's endlessly fascinating.

In my opinion, Scarpia is one of the greatest parts ever written. He is a man of immense power and is an incredibly unreputable character. My challenge as an artist is to find the humanity in this man in order to make him real. He cannot just be a caricature of evil. It is important that the person is alive in that evil in order for it to resonate. I believe Scarpia's evilness is in his decisions. It's about what he chooses to do and how he does it. It's how he manipulates and that is something we still have to look out for in our own lives. When someone reveals themselves to you, believe them – especially by their actions.

[**Jill**] Tosca has become a signature role for me. In this run of production, I will hit my 50th performance as Tosca and I see her very differently now than I did when I started singing her six years ago. Many think of her as a diva but I have come to see her much differently. I'm discovering yet again the moment to moment things that happened to her and how those experiences influence her actions. She was an orphan raised by nuns who discovered that she had this incredible voice. She learned to sing in the church – much like I did – and she went on to become a revered star.



(c) Lyric Opera Baltimore

This Opera takes place in Rome on the 17th of June in the year 1800 in a timespan of less than 24 hours. At its core it is about three characters caught in this triangle of political intrigue, romantic passion and absolute power. In a matter of hours my character finds herself pulled between these huge emotions of love and passion and responsibility and position. Scarpia (Jake's character) is using his political power to possess her and violate her by raping her and killing her true partner in love. I then have no other choice but to murder him. You have to really feel what drives her to this point.



(c) Lyric Opera Baltimore

[Jake] And all of this is happening alongside the most sumptuous music. Puccini's gift was that he could write four notes that would conjure up the most intense emotional feelings.



What do you love about opera and why do you believe it is still relevant today?

[**Jake**] It is the most colossal art form there is – marrying so many themes and elements. It is very complicated to produce and unfortunately that can make it expensive. It takes time because you are putting layers on top of layers to create the performance. But when everything comes together just right there is nothing in this world like it. It is so worth the investment.

[**Jill**] And the stories we explore mirror what we are dealing with in our current society. It forces us to address the shadow sides of ourselves. Those sides we often know are there but do not want to look at – or we simply do not care are there. It gives us the opportunity to see these sides of ourselves and face them in the moment.



(c) Piedmont Opera / Traci Arney

What keeps you both motivated and passionate about your craft?

[**Jill**] In our society right now – particularly for those forty and under – you are told that in your lifetime you will have many careers. As an artist you have to understand what that means and how you are going to define that. Jake is my husband and I love him in that way but I truly have such tremendous respect for him as an artist. He has been in the business for a little over forty years now and that longevity (in this business) doesn't happen very often. His favorite thing to say right now is hashtag 'Maturity Matters' and there is so much truth to that. To find someone like him who did not just *do it right* but also *did it well* is invaluable. As I head into my second decade as a professional singer I realize just how important that is. You have to make wise choices and sometimes you have to say no and you have to know when to do that. You have to know when to take your risks.

[**Jake**] We continue to reinvent within a single discipline and within an established structure. But what continues to invigorate me is the material itself. We are working with material that is coming through some of the greatest channelers in western civilization and we are doing it in this modern cultural way.

[**Jill**] As a spiritual person I think of the theater like a church. When we get to that moment of performing live – when the downbeat happens, the performance is about to start and the audience is in their seats... I get chills just thinking about it...it is something so special. It's not like going to an athletic event because there is no competition involved. The theater becomes this circle of energy that is addressing itself. It's cathartic. You want them to experience that mirror and connect. It is like a drug.



(c) Lyric Opera Baltimore

~ *Andrea Littell*

Posted in **Art & Design, Music & Dance** Tagged **Art, Artist, Interview, Jake Gardner, Jill Gardner, Opera, Puccini, Stevens Center, The Piedmont Opera, Tosca, Winston-Salem** 1 Comment

One thought on “A Conversation with Jill and Jake Gardner of The

Jake Gardner Civic Accomplishments

The Singing and Actors Studio: Jake was a vocal coach and provided pro bono instruction for underserved populations in our area.

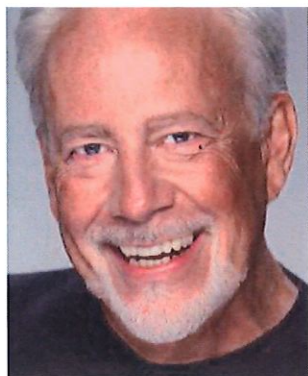
Piedmont Opera volunteer- Jake regularly attended Piedmont Opera's golf tournaments and would sing for tips on the course. All proceeds benefited Piedmont Opera.

2019 Senior Champion at Maple Chase Country Club- Jake loved to golf and played in as many tournaments as his career would allow. All proceeds of the tournaments benefited local non-profits.

Jake and his wife Jill (also an opera singer) worked in fundraisers when they were both in Winston-Salem. They performed at Pfafftown Christian Church in a July 4th and Christmas concert, and all proceeds were returned to the church. They also performed two Christmas concerts at New Hope Methodist (Winston-Salem) and two at Mizpha Moravian Church in Rural Hall.

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BIOGRAPHY

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Boasting a career of performances with major opera companies and orchestras worldwide, bass-baritone Jake Gardner remains one of the opera world's most sought-after singing actors.

Having sung a decade as principal baritone with Oper der Stadt Köln under the baton of James Conlon, his long and distinguished career has included performances with such notable companies as Wiener Volksopera, Dresden's Semper Oper, Glyndebourne Festival, De Nederlandse Opera, Edinburgh Festival as well as Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera and a host of excellent American regional companies.

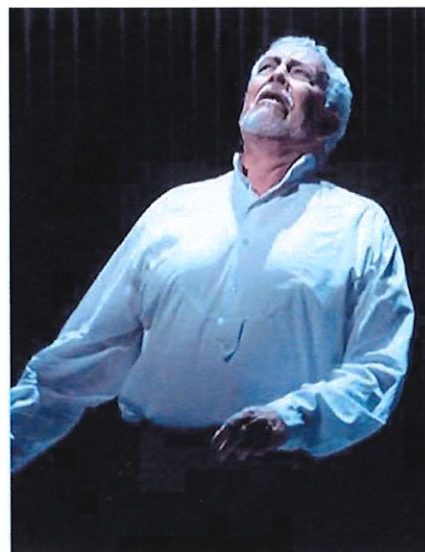
Career highlights include a world tour and film of Peter Brook's *Le Tragédie de Carmen*; a landmark production of *Così fan Tutte* with Trevor Nunn and Simon Rattle at the Glyndebourne Festival,

and the world premiere of William Bolcom's *A Wedding* directed by Robert Altman commemorating Lyric Opera of Chicago's 50th Anniversary season.

Equally at home in the operetta and musical theater traditions, Mr. Gardner has recently appeared in productions of *Annie Get Your Gun* (Buffalo Bill) and *The Music Man* (Mayor Shin) with the Glimmerglass Festival, *Merry Widow* (Baron Zeta) with Los Angeles Opera, *A Little Night Music* (Frederic) with Hawai'i Opera Theater, *Die Fledermaus* (Frank) and *HMS Pinafore* (Sir Joseph Porter) as well as a critically-acclaimed portrayal of Judge Turpin (*Sweeney Todd*), all with Virginia Opera. He returned to the role of Judge Turpin in recent seasons with Houston Grand Opera, Mill City Summer Opera as well as Eugene Opera where he also made a triumphant debut in the role of Prince Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* in the 2015–2016 season.

For the 2016–2017 season, Mr. Gardner made his Indianapolis Opera debut as Harold Ryan in the highly-anticipated world premiere production of Richard Auldson Clark's and Kurt Vonnegut's *Happy Birthday Wanda June*, celebrated his 100th role performance as the Hermit in *Der Freischütz* for Virginia Opera, made his debut with Anchorage Opera in the company's 55th Anniversary Gala Concerts as well as Opera San Antonio in the role of Dr. Bartolo, and sang the role of Scarpia opposite his wife, soprano [Jill Gardner's Tosca](#), for Piedmont Opera and Opera Coeur d'Alene. During the 2017–2018 season, Mr. Gardner sang the role of Ashby in Virginia Opera's *La Fanciulla del West*, returned to Eugene Opera for Dr. Bartolo in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, debuted the role of Sulpice in *La Fille du Regiment* with Hawai'i Opera Theater and returned to Opera San Antonio for performances of Benoit/Alcindoro in Puccini's *La Bohème*. For the 2018–2019 season, he returned to the Lyric Opera of Chicago for performances of Benoit/Alcindoro in Puccini's *La Bohème* and debuted the role of Le Bailli in *Werther* for Florida Grand Opera. On the concert stage, he returned to the Binghamton Philharmonic for Wagner's *Ring Cycle in One Night*, under the baton of Daniel Hege.

[Bass-baritone Jake Gardner died at home with his loving wife Jill by his side on November 2, 2021.](#)



JAKE GARDNER, bass baritone

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