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Operatic new Billyburg venue

By Ben Muessig

The Brooklyn Paper

Williamsburgers, launder your tuxes and grab your monocles.

A long-forgotten 600-seat theater, complete with a proscenium and a raked Shakespearean stage, will open to the public for the first time in decades next week — for three nights of opera!



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Thomas Lawrence Toscano, artistic director of OperaOggiNY, will bring his avant-garde opera troupe to a long-forgotten theater on Berry Street in Williamsburg Nov. 6–8.

Built as a community center, library, and performance space in 1897, the McCaddin Memorial Theater on Berry Street faded into obscurity, functioning primarily as the site of the St. Peter and Paul Roman after school program since 2000.

But on Nov. 6, Thomas Lawrence Toscano, artistic director of OperaOggiNY, will reopen the venue with a minimalist rendition of Franco Leoni's gripping opera "L'Oracolo."

And as excited as Toscano is about the three performances, which feature a small cast of local actors crooning about San Francisco's Chinatown at the turn of the 20th century, he's just as eager to bring new life to the long-forgotten — but surprisingly intact — venue.

“It’s a phenomenal theater,” he said. “There just aren’t spaces that are built like this anymore. It could bring so much to the neighborhood: modern theater, traditional theater, modern music, traditional music — you could do anything here.”

After the three-night opera stand, the next public event at the McCaddin Memorial Theater will be a sing-a-long of Handel’s “Messiah” on Dec. 14 at 4 pm.

“L’Oracolo,” Nov. 6–8 at McCaddin Memorial Theater (288 Berry St. between South Second and Third Streets), 7 pm. Tickets, \$20. For information, call (718) 312-8064.

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