

# Baltimore Concert Opera presents: Floyd's *Susannah*



## WHO?

Composer and Librettist:  
Carlisle Floyd  
(born June 11, 1926)

## WHAT?

Floyd called this operatic creation a 'musical drama,' focusing on both music and text to tell the story.

## WHEN?

Premiered on  
February 24, 1955  
(62 years prior to our opening night!)

## WHERE?

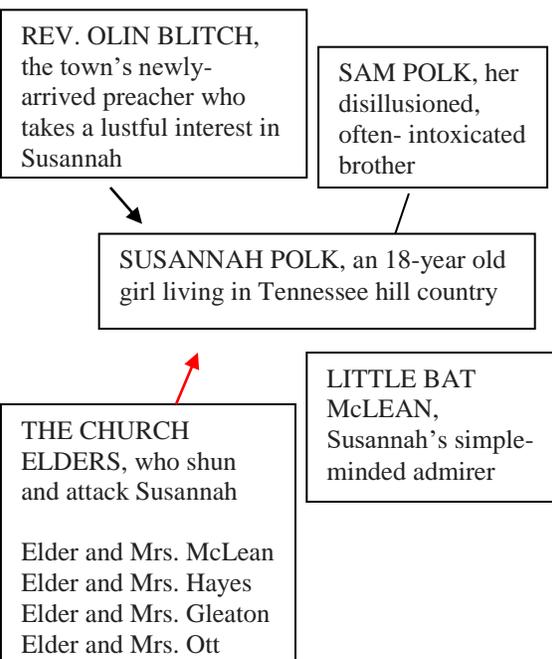
First performance at Florida State University, followed by premieres at New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera and over 800 subsequent worldwide productions.

## The Gist of the Story:

Setting: New Hope Valley, Tennessee in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century; loosely inspired by the Apocryphal tale of Susannah and the Elders

Set in the 1950s in the backwoods of Tennessee hill country, the opera centers on 18-year-old Susannah, who faces hostility from women in her church community for her beauty and the attention it attracts from their husbands. As she innocently bathes in a nearby creek one day, the church elders spy on Susannah, and their own lustful impulses drive them to accuse her of sin and seduction. Among these hypocrites is the newly-arrived Reverend Olin Blitch, whose own inner darkness leads to heart-wrenching tragedy for Susannah. Dealing with the dramatic themes of jealousy, gossip, and 'group-think' -- and filled with soaring folk-inspired melodies -- this opera has been a favorite of opera-goers for many years.

## The Characters



## Who is Carlisle Floyd?



Born in South Carolina to a piano teacher and a Methodist minister, Carlisle Floyd developed an interest in music early on. Studying creative writing, piano and then coming to composition, he found himself teaching at Florida State University in the mid 1950s. Always one to write both the music and texts for his operas, he believes that this process gives him greater artistic control to tell the stories he wishes to communicate. He shares, "I always considered myself a theatrical composer — I've never been interested in writing symphonies and string quartets. I like to work with the written word and with drama, and I'm never happier than when I'm in a theater." In addition to *Susannah*, his work has focused on many pieces inspired by great works of English-language literature including: *Of Mice and Men*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Cold Sassy Tree* and others. After teaching at FSU for over 30 years, he moved to Houston, TX and began a long collaboration with Houston Grand Opera. Still composing decades later, his newest work (*Prince of Players*) premieres in New York City this year. Known as the "Dean of American Music," his writing incorporates both a lyricism and sense of Americana that has captured the hearts of generations of American audiences.

## Great performers of the roles in Floyd's *Susannah*

'Susannah'  
Phyllis Curtin  
Renee Fleming  
Patricia Racette

'Reverend Olin Blitch'  
Norman Triegle  
Samuel Ramey  
Raymond Aceto

'Sam Polk'  
Walter James  
Jerry Hadley  
Brandon Jovanovich

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