

A BURNING HEART FILM
LAUNDRY AND TOSCA

Sometimes just *following* a dream is enough.



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Color, approximate running time: 30 minutes

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Sometimes just *following* a dream is enough.



*“...crosses
all cultural
and language
boundaries and
brought the room
to tears. One of
my top ten ‘unseen’
films of 2005.”*

– FILM CRITIC

For most of her adult life, Marcia Whitehead has lived in a little garage apartment in Southern California and worked a modest-wage job. Like most of us, she lives paycheck to paycheck, and has more debt than savings. And, like most of us, she dreams of an abundant life, beyond the ordinary.

Her body is built to sing what is considered by many to be the hardest repertoire in song. When she was first told that she was a rare, lirico-spinto soprano, she was disappointed because she did not care for opera. Nevertheless, she was obedient to what she believed was God’s imperative call to develop her talent: for over twenty years, she worked her 9 to 5 during the day, paying for coaches and teachers to train her voice on weekends and nights. Along the way, she learned to love the characters in the operas that were written for her voice: Tosca, Aida, Andrea Chenier, Manon Lescaut, Cavalleria Rusticana, La Forza del Destino.

A random acquaintance offered to arrange a hearing by Maestro Franco Iglesias—a world-renowned vocal instructor in New York City—whose students once included world-class tenor Placido Domingo. It took a year just to arrange the audition, during which Iglesias would judge her chances at a late-blooming career. In the time that follows, it becomes clear that Marcia’s dream of an abundant life has already come true.

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THE FILMMAKERS

Produced, directed and edited by: Lauralee Farrer

Director of Photography: Taggart A. Lee

Production Associates: Susana Name and Tamara Johnston

Associate Editor: Loren Roberts



THE CAST

Marcia Whitehead

Franco Iglesias

Susana Name

Lauralee Farrer

Natia Astakhishvili

FILM FESTIVAL RESUME

November 2004	International premier at the Sabaoth Film Festival in Milan, Italy; Best Music Award
December 2004	U.S. premiere, Santa Fe Film Festival, Santa Fe, New Mexico
March 2005	Los Angeles premiere, Damah Film Festival; Best Documentary Award
April 2005	Ashland Independent Film Festival, Ashland, OR; Best Documentary Short Finalist (Marcia presented mini-concert at the Opening Night gala)
April 2005	New River Film Festival 2005, Blacksburg, VA; Official Film Festival Selection
April 2005	USA Film Festival, Best Documentary Finalist
August 2005	Leith Film Festival; Edinburgh, Scotland; Official Film Festival Selection
September 2005	411NYC Film Festival, New York, NY; Presented mini-concert at opening night event
September 2005	BendFILM Festival, Bend, OR; Presented special 2-hr event screening and concert

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DETAILED SYNOPSIS

“Marcia Whitehead is a friend of mine. She used to live in an apartment just down the stairs here—a little apartment behind the garage. And I knew that she wanted to be an opera singer, but I didn’t realize how much of her life she had put into that. What Marcia is following is the deepest voice in her heart. She is not going to look back when she’s 80 and feel regret. So I called her one night and said ‘what’s happening’ you know, ‘what are you doing? And she said ‘the same old thing: laundry and Tosca’ and she laughed. And I thought that’s really it right there in a nutshell. That encapsulates her life. It’s the sublime and the ridiculous.”



“...it’s got more story and drama than many feature films I’ve seen, presented in such a masterful way that it blurs the lines of literal and fiction, and left me thinking I could do the unachievable.”

Laundry and Tosca follows the musical journey of soprano Marcia Whitehead, a 9-5 office-worker from Sierra Madre, CA, as she pursues her dream of becoming an opera singer and creating a life for herself beyond the ordinary. After 20 years of vocal instruction paid for with secretarial salaries from charitable organizations, the solitude of training an operatic voice, thousands of hours of practice and commuting for 2-3 hours each night after work to sing in the professional chorus with Opera Pacific, an audition was arranged for Marcia in New York City with world-renowned vocal instructor, Franco Iglesias.

Marcia and her friends Susana and Lauralee arrived in New York for Marcia’s audition with Iglesias during the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The hotel in which they stayed was filled with psychologists and rescue and recovery workers and all three ladies felt somewhat uncomfortable with being there for a vocal audition when everyone around them was dealing with so much trauma and pain. But when Marcia’s friend shared with other hotel guests and rescue workers the purpose of their visit to New York, the interest in Marcia’s dream was overwhelming. Perhaps those rescue workers appreciated hearing a story about hope and beauty and determination. As Marcia leaves for her audition with Maestro Iglesias, hotel personnel, guests and rescue workers alike all called out to her with well-wishes and “Go, Marcia, go!”

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“The story is so moving and deeply transforming. I couldn’t get the hope and power of Marcia’s life-changing experiences out of my head for many weeks.

Maestro describes meeting Marcia for the first time. He could see immediately in her structure that her body was made to sing. After she sings one aria, Iglesias becomes effusive with praise and says the voice is not normal, but is a gift from God. He is utterly convinced that she will sing on all the great operatic stages in the world. What started as a 15-minute audition for the purpose of obtaining an educated opinion regarding Marcia’s professional vocal potential turned out to be the pivotal moment in Marcia’s life. The film incorporates vocal lessons with Iglesias as he puts Marcia through the grueling and exasperating paces of creating a world-class voice and coaches her through dramatic arias in preparation for Marcia’s first audition with an operatic management agency.

Marcia recounts how deeply moving it was to sing “The Lord’s Prayer” specifically for her father before moving to New York. A man of reserved emotions, she describes how he ran down the aisle at the end of his daughter’s recital, with tears running down his face and embraced her in the tightest hug she’d ever received – a defining moment in their lives. Lauralee goes on to describe the unbelievable timing of Marcia traveling to Washington DC to sing for Susana’s father’s funeral and just two days later singing for Lauralee’s father’s funeral in Texas.

The film follows Marcia to her first audition with a top-notch operatic agent and when the agent cancels, the audition is turned into a dress rehearsal. Moments from the audition turned dress rehearsal in which Marcia is singing an aria from “Aida” are juxtaposed with scenes of Marcia and Iglesias working through the same aria in lessons and coaching sessions in Maestro’s home in Brooklyn and studio in Manhattan.

After a particularly hard and frustrating voice lesson when Marcia was not sure she had the fortitude to continue, Marcia stopped to pick up “everything everybody needs” at Wal-Mart and recounts an experience she had while shopping. Overheard humming, a woman stopped Marcia and said, “I hope you sing!” Marcia shares that she does sing opera and the woman is overjoyed saying she’s always wanted to meet an opera singer and begs Marcia to sing a line or two of opera. Marcia agreed and sang, in full voice, a phrase or two from an Italian opera and both women ended up in a tearful embrace. Marcia explains that the experience served as the encouragement they both needed and Marcia realized the experience served as an affirmation of God’s call for Marcia to sing. She realized that God had given her the opportunity to affect another person’s life with the musical gift God had put in her body – her voice.

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ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS



“...a film by a woman, about a woman called by God to sing for His glory. How can you resist the offer to translate into Arabic and broadcast throughout the Middle East?”



LAURALEE FARRER (WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER/EDITOR)

Filmmaker Lauralee Farrer has been writing, producing, and directing for over thirty years. As principal filmmaker of Burning Heart Productions, she is the creative energy behind their projects in several stages of development: an innovative feature-length documentary, *The Fair Trade* (2007); a narrative feature *Praying the Hours* (2007); and an ambitious set of feature period narrative films surrounding Rodin's sculpture of the *Burghers of Calais*.

Her first personal film project, which she wrote, produced, directed, and edited under the banner of Burning Heart Productions was the award-winning documentary *Laundry and Tosca* (2004). The film premiered in Milan, and has been recognized at eight other festivals including an American premiere at the Santa Fe Film Festival. The film investigates the life of soprano Marcia Whitehead, exploring the idea of whether simply following a dream can be enough to build a meaningful life. An event combining the film screening, Whitehead singing, and Farrer speaking has been presented in the following years at colleges, Q&A forums, panels, conferences, colleges, forums, summits, churches, and professional and private environments. This experience was the impetus behind Farrer's emerging public speaking engagements.

Farrer's freelance work for humanitarian organizations took her to Spain when Franco died, to Kenya during the droughts of 1981 and 1991, to Somalia when the war broke out, and to Uganda to write about early outbreaks of AIDS and the plight of its orphans. She visited the Sisters of Charity in Ethiopia, was in Moscow when the 1991 coup took place, and when Leningrad became St. Petersburg again. She was in East Germany before and after the wall went down, in Mexico City to write about cultures of poverty, and in U.S. cities like Philadelphia, Houston, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Boston to write about American life. This is the material from which her directing and screenwriting voice emerges.

Farrer studied in Heidelberg, Germany, and at various California institutions including Pepperdine University and UCLA, before gaining a degree from Azusa Pacific University. Her screenwriting education includes graduate-level filmic writing at USC, various professional seminars (e.g., Robert McKee, John Truby, John Schlesinger, etc.) and interviews with Sydney Pollack, Hume Cronyn, Milos Forman, Roland Joffe, and David Puttnam.

While she was researching tribal warfare in Kenya, the 1992 Los Angeles uprisings occurred. A classical theater group pairing volunteer professionals and at-risk teenagers, for which she directed and produced, was started as a response. The endeavor culminated in the largest-ever production in the Opera House of The Kennedy Center, and receipt of the national Community Solutions in Education Award.

Farrer was coproducer for L.A.-based Lovestruck Pictures' *Best Man in Grass Creek*. During that time, for three years, Farrer lived in a Benedictine community in Denver, Colorado — a providential experience that formed much of the basis for her current feature, *Praying the Hours*.

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ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS (CONT.)



TAGGART A. LEE (DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY)

Taggart Lee came to light, images and cinematography early in his life as the son of a Pasadena, California portrait photographer and lighting designer and inventor. He was editing and shooting on tools bought second hand at a neighborhood camera shop by age 11, and soon after high school trained as an assistant under cinematography greats Lazlo Kovacs ASC and Jeffrey Jur ASC. In college, Lee shot photo essays of Northern Ireland in pursuit of earning two degrees in political science. After college he returned to shooting film, assisting on the east coast on such projects as *The West Wing*, *Linc's*, *Thirteen Days* and countless commercials. An opportunity arose to shoot and operate test shots on the film *Kiss the Girls* that cemented Lee's resolve to make the move to cinematographer. Soon after arriving back in Los Angeles, Lee established a reputation for a more lyrical style of shooting on small independent projects at a time when frenetic camera movement was the rage. In 2002 he formed One Ton Shadow Productions with Maurice Jordan, and in 2003 was asked by Lauralee Farrer to shoot her documentary *Laundry and Tosca* which went on to win several film festival awards. The experience was one of his most memorable to date, and he and Farrer were able to re-establish a fluid working style they began years before with a Pasadena-based theater company. Lee's fascination with film continues to evolve as he seeks out projects of substance and vision that require dynamic visuals in the telling of story. "I'm not so interested in letting the image draw attention to itself (unless that's called for), as I am in letting an image set a tone for the story and characters." Lee is a member of the International Cinematographer's Guild.

*"...hits at the heart of
an unaddressed issue in
our culture — the desire
for a life of meaning."*



TAMARA A. JOHNSTON (PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE)

Tamara Joy Johnston began a career in film by producing student films and independent projects while earning a bachelors degree in psychology from Azusa Pacific University. After assisting producer Jack Hafer of Boulevard Pictures (then Gumshoe Productions, "To End All Wars") she began a three-year relationship with ImageMovers, Robert Zemeckis' (*Forrest Gump*, "Cast Away") production company. She worked her way up from the production office on the feature film "The Polar Express" to first assistant in the office of producer Steve Starkey.

Recently, Johnston left ImageMovers to pursue other ventures in media and humanitarian work. She is currently producing feature documentaries on the AIDS crisis in Africa and is starting a non-profit organization with her two partners. Johnston also works closely with writer/director/producer Lauralee Farrer and Burning Heart Productions on projects such as the award-winning documentary "Laundry and Tosca" (2004) and feature narrative film "Praying the Hours" (2006). She first met Farrer in 1992 while volunteering with Theater Quest, a non-profit group that worked with professional actors and at-risk teens in the Pasadena area.

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ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS (CONT.)



LOREN A. ROBERTS (SOUND AND FILM EDITOR)

Loren Roberts is the most progressive kind of independent filmmaker, having mastered many of the creative elements of filmmaking as cameraman, sound designer, editor and graphic designer. His filmmaking has taken him most recently throughout Asia – in Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Thailand, Hong Kong and Japan – for international clients. Roberts has a history with director Lauralee Farrer in their collaboration on the recent award-winning documentary, *Laundry and Tosca* (2004) for which he served as sound and film editor.

Roberts owns Hearken Creative Services (HCS), a multi-disciplinary creative firm. Under the aegis of HCS since 1993, Roberts has partnered with clients such as USC, Fuller Theological Seminary, World Vision, and museums and botanical gardens in the greater Los Angeles area, bringing a classic aesthetic to film, print, online, and multimedia advertising.

Roberts graduated from Occidental College with a degree in Religious Studies, and has produced and engineered folk/rock albums for local acts.

“...deeply transforming...should be told and sung and shown as much as possible to every age group.”

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ABOUT THE CAST



*“...left me loving
opera when I never
have before, and
loving Marcia
Whitehead whom
I’ve never met. She
is all of us who
have relatively
mundane lives with
real dreams and
aspirations alive
inside of us.”*

MARCIA WHITEHEAD (LIRICO-SPINTO SOPRANO)

Marcia Whitehead was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and grew up in the suburbs of Los Angeles, California. She currently lives in Salem, Oregon after having spent 4 years in the metropolitan New York area, working exclusively with world-renowned vocal instructor, Franco Iglesias. Marcia is an award-winning lirico-spinto soprano, whose vocal gifts were discovered after her college experience in the dramatic arts. She was involved with music at an early age, but her serious pursuit of opera commenced after a choral concert where she stepped in at the last minute for an ailing soloist and an enthusiastic audience member offered to sponsor professional training. Subsequently, her private vocal study has included training with Kathleen Darragh of Los Angeles, and Maestro Franco Iglesias of New York City. Her operatic coaches have included Greg Buchhalter and Luis Menendez of the Metropolitan Opera and international operatic soprano, Juliana Gondek and Ann Baltz of OperaWorks. Additionally, Marcia has studied stage movement with academy award-winning actress Alfre Woodard and language arts with Carmen Brunol.

Marcia was thrilled to perform an aria, composed specifically for her voice, as a guest artist in a production of “Romeo and Juliet,” performed at the Kennedy Center’s Opera House. She was also invited to be a guest artist, and sing the role of Abigail in *The Crucible* for the California State University at Fullerton, California. In addition, Marcia participated in recording the sound tracks for Hanna-Barbera’s *Jetsons: The Movie* and *The Easter Story*.

In an Opera Guild of Southern California competition, she was recognized as an unusual talent, as she performed arias, art songs, oratorio selections, recitatives, duets, trios and ensembles in a rigorous contest, for which she was a finalist and award winner.

Marcia’s years in the professional chorus of California’s Opera Pacific gave her several opportunities to sing “bit” roles and occasionally serve as rehearsal cover for roles lead roles in *Der Fliegende Hollander*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*. On two occasions, while rehearsing *Tosca* and *Aida*, Marcia was heard by general directors David DiChiera and Patrick Veitch (respectively) who both encouraged her to pursue work on the world’s operatic stages. Though Mr. Veitch was aware that Marcia had come to opera later than most singers, he pronounced her voice “glorious in the extreme” and told Marcia “you have the voice for which the entire operatic world awaits.”

Marcia is the subject of this award-winning documentary film, *Laundry and Tosca*, which has been honored in international film festivals in Europe, Great Britain and the United States. Marcia was presented the award for “Best Music” in Milan for her work in the film. After experiencing a profound encounter with the Lord, Marcia has chosen to focus all her musical energies with a heart for Christian ministry. In addition to worship concerts, she enjoys presenting both arias and worship music in a faith-based ministry, born out of the film *Laundry and Tosca* that is a poetic examination of what it means to follow a calling and the abundant living that can result. Ministry opportunities have taken Marcia to Washington DC, New York, California, Oregon, New Mexico, New Jersey, Idaho, Texas and Utah, where *Laundry and Tosca* was presented for the Windrider Forum at the Sundance Film Festival.

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ABOUT THE CAST (CONT.)

Marcia has performed several classical concert works with choral societies and regional orchestras in California. Her concert repertoire includes works by Verdi, Mozart, Bach, Vivaldi, Faure, Saint-Saens, Britten and Rossini. In addition to those works, Marcia's sacred repertoire includes music composed by both Gospel and contemporary Christian artists. Marcia has sung with regional opera companies in Oregon, California, New York, and New Jersey and her operatic repertoire includes *Aida*, *Andrea Chenier*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *The Crucible*, *The Consul*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Tosca* and *Un Ballo in Maschera*.



MAESTRO FRANCO IGLESIAS (VOCAL INSTRUCTOR)

Maestro Franco Iglesias has enjoyed an international career with much success in the operatic field. He made his debut at the age of 15 in his native Mexico, singing zarzuela with Pepita Embil, Placido Domingo's mother. Five years later he joined the roster of La Scala after winning their prestigious competition and began a career that would encompass a repertoire of 62 operatic roles and span 34 years.

For many years, Maestro Iglesias was the leading baritone for the Israeli National Opera Company. He also served as advisor and director for that same company. It was during these years in Tel Aviv that Iglesias was Placido Domingo's teacher and was a major influence in the guidance of Domingo's career. Upon returning to the United States in 1967, Maestro Iglesias won the prestigious Rockefeller Foundation Competition in New York City.

Maestro Iglesias has performed in the major opera houses of London and Paris as well as throughout Germany and Italy. He has shared the stage with such distinguished colleagues as Victoria de los Angeles, Maria Callas, Pilar Lorengar, Mignon Dunn, Renata Tebaldi, Clara Petrella, Renata Scotto, Birgit Nilsson, Claramae Turner, Giulietta Simionato, Roberta Peters, Anna Moffo, Licia Albanese, Mirella Freni, Talo Tajo, Mario Del Monaco, Giuseppe de Stefano, Jon Vickers, George London, Norman Treigle, Tito Gobbi, Alfredo Kraus, Nicolai Ghiaurov and Placido Domingo.

Maestro Iglesias has been a winner of major competitions including "The Verdi Competition" in Busetto and those of Parma, Munich, Lyons, Marseilles, Reggio Emilia and Vercelli. He has sung under the batons of the world renowned conductors Julius Rudel, Anton Guadagno, Anton Coppola, Alfredo Silipigni, Nino Sanzogno, Silvio Varviso, Andre Clytana and Boris Goldovsky, just to name a few.

In the United States the Maestro has been the recipient of major grants from "The Kathryn Miller Fund" and "The Ford," "Rockefeller" and "I. M. Gelb" Foundations.

In addition to his extensive career as both singer and vocal instructor, Maestro Iglesias served as stage director for opera companies in Israel, Marseilles, Mexico; and in the United States: Hartford, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Tucson and New York City. He was the director of a special training program at the Philadelphia College of Performing Arts and served as vocal advisor for the Astral Foundation. Iglesias is currently the director of The Center for Opera Performance in New York City, which he founded in 1982.

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ABOUT THE CAST (CONT.)

As artistic director, Iglesias has held posts in both “El Palacio de Bellas Artes” in Mexico City and the National Opera of Venezuela.

Maestro Iglesias has appeared as a guest on “Good Morning America” and was interviewed by RAI Radio Televisione Italiana. He has been featured in an article on voice teachers in “Opera News” and was profiled in a cover article of the “New York Opera Newsletter.” He was also a major contributing force and organizer for the special PBS production, “Domingo: The Singer, The Maestro,” and for “Pittsburgh Presents: Domingo - A Master Class.” Iglesias has been the vocal instructor for several notable voices heard at the Metropolitan Opera including Maria Spacagna, Harolyn Blackwell, Gwynne Geyer, and Ainhwa Arteta.

Recently released on the Legato Classic label, Iglesias can be heard on recordings of “Simon Boccanegra” with Renata Tebaldi and Richard Tucker, conducted by James Levine and on the Qualitron label recording of “La Boheme” with Mirella Freni.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Marcia Whitehead's story is simple and good-hearted on the surface, but it has an undercurrent that gives it an appeal beyond audiences that know her or have a special love for opera.

It would be enough if “Laundry and Tosca” were about 20 years of holding on to a dream of singing opera. Marcia's stamina is inspiring enough to warrant documenting—a reminder for those of us tempted to give up along our own way. What interests me is not opera, or even my friend's considerable courage, but the reality that her life has been immeasurably richer because she said “yes,” and that the outcome is irrelevant in comparison.

When we went to New York to shoot, we thought we'd be recording her first audition for an agent—an event she has worked toward for over two decades. When the agent postponed, it seemed devastating, a ruined ending. And, as often happens, the mystery of an apparent setback actually revealed a deeper, more important focus to the story.

The tagline of the film is “sometimes, just *following* a dream is enough.” The sublime and the ridiculous of Marcia's otherwise unremarkable life is that by staying the course that she believes God charted for her in song, her life has been filled with faith, music and rich experiences. The title defines the continuum of that life—from laundry to opera—and the core message is that every life has the mundane, there's no avoiding it. But whether each of us will experience the transcendent has more to do with willingness to respond to our deepest yearnings, and courage to go the distance. The secret of the heart's deepest call is that *no matter what*, “yes” is the answer that results in abundant life.

It was an improbable experience at a Wal-Mart that reminded me of this truth. We wanted to get a few shots of the “paper goods aisle” that Marcia refers to in a pivotal part of the film. We'd just spent one whole precious day trying just to get onto the exterior grounds of a New York arts institution, with very harsh rebuffs. It was halfway into the night, we were soaked to the bone and demoralized. We decided to try, even though no one had much hope for spontaneous permission to shoot. I started a suddenly very unconvincing pitch, tripping over my words, and thinking, to be frank, that the opera thing wasn't going to inspire this guy. He listened intently for a few minutes and interrupted me, saying, “Lauralee. It's about following the dream, am I right?” And he sort of tapped at his heart, just to clarify. In that moment, Mike the New Jersey Wal-Mart night manager knew more about this archetypal reality than I did, and I did what any self-respecting independent filmmaker would do under the circumstances. I started to cry. That's the kind of thing I wanted to capture. The core of the story that *everyone* understands.

*“I don't know
what you're
doing in there,
but people
go in normal
and come out
crying and
saying their
lives have been
changed.”*

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BACKSTORY:

A LETTER DESCRIBING MARCIA'S AUDITION WITH MAESTRO IGLESIAS

(Marsh, I sent this out to some mutual friends. Love and congratulations again for the millionth time. HAVE COURAGE! Lauralee)

"It's taken me a few days to have the energy to write this down, the audition Marcia had in New York was so amazing.

Some Background: As most of you know, Marcia has felt since she was just out of college that God has called her to sing. Any of you who have heard her recently would agree. She said that while she was searching for an answer to what to do with her life, she was singing in a choral group. During her brief solo in a Christmas concert, she felt a hand on her shoulder, and heard as clear as day, "Marcia, this is what I want you to do." It's a good thing she heard it so clearly, because it had to sustain her for over 20 years of vocal exercises, the solitude of training an operatic voice, thousands of hours of practice, commuting for 2-3 hours each night after work to sing with Opera Pacific, and paying for lessons and coaching sessions on her low-paying secretarial salaries while working for charitable organizations.

Just a few months ago, Marcia visited a church with a friend of hers and when the pastor was introduced to her, he asked her what she does. She told him about her secretarial job with a residential treatment center for abused children and he said, "No, not that." What else? So she told him a little about her efforts to pursue a career in opera and how she has sustained that calling and been obedient to it pretty much by herself without very much encouragement for those two decades since. Anyway, he shook his finger in her face and said listen to me carefully. "People will start to see you differently, not very long from now. And a time is going to come when you're going to have to "get out of the boat." Marcia says she knew exactly what he meant. She knew that God was going to call her away from the small daily disciplines and into a realm that only He can manage.

A mutual friend of ours made arrangements for Marcia to audition for Maestro Franco Iglesias in New York just to get an educated opinion regarding career potential. Iglesias was Placido Domingo's vocal coach and helped Domingo create a vocal technique that has resulted in an astonishing voice and a very long career. Luckily, Marcia didn't have any idea who Iglesias was at the time of the audition. Otherwise, she says she might not have had the nerve to accept his invitation.

Maestro Iglesias invited Susana, our friend who arranged the audition, and I to sit in on the audition. The room was about the size of a Buick, and ancient, so we were hoping there was rebar in the foundation. Iglesias was reserved, but kind. Marcia sang one aria, I think something in Czech, and his posture changed. She finished and asked if he would like to hear something else and he said no.

CONTINUED...

"...this voice is not normal. It's an astonishing gift from God!"



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*“I couldn’t get
the hope and
power of Marcia’s
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weeks.”*

BACKSTORY (CONT.)

He stood up and practically started singing himself. “Bravissima, mi amor, what an instrument!” What a gorgeous instrument! This is not a big voice, this is an astonishing gift from God!” Maestro worked with Marcia for nearly an hour and even though I don’t know the finer points of coaching an operatic voice, it was clear that this man really knew what he was doing. In fact, several times I thought to myself, I will remember this day for the rest of my life.

Iglesias became effusive with praise. He says with polishing work on technique and role interpretation with himself or another teach of Marcia’s choosing, primarily to make her heavy repertoire easier on the voice, she will be ready to audition for all the major managers. And he says, with a silly grin on his face, “I will call them all! And when I tell them what I have discovered they will ALL come to hear her. And when she chooses a manager, she will have a major career!” “This voice will sing for decades,” he said. I kid you not, Iglesias went on to compare our Marcia to Domingo. (“People will start seeing you differently.” I’ll say!!!) He kept rubbing his hands together like an excited child and saying, “Ah! I am just dreaming! I am dreaming of what awaits this voice.”

Iglesias kept thanking her for coming and he kept telling her how beautiful her voice was and what a gift. What a miracle he thought it was that God had brought them together. When we returned to Maestro’s studio the next day, already there were people who knew who Marcia was. Students coming out of his studio were introduced to Marcia and asked her, “Are you the one! Are you the one he’s been talking about?” Wow.

A friend of Iglesias’, a famous ballet coach who taught dancers Fontaine and Nureyev, met Marcia and laughed out loud. He could tell from her face that she was a singer. In fact, the first thing he said when he spotted her was not “IS she a singer,” but “WHAT does she sing?” Then Iglesias told him in Spanish that she had a magnificent voice and that he was moved to tears by hearing her and how she was already better than so many famous opera singers. Susana and I sat and listened to their conversation and just shook our heads in disbelief that what we thought would be a 15-minute audition resulting in an opinion had turned into quite possibly the pivotal moment in Marcia’s life; a truly life-changing experience.

As Marcia and Maestro said goodbye to each other, there were tears in his eyes. He grabbed her shoulders and said, “We’re going to do this together. We’re going to do it and you WILL have a career. Honestly, I think he was more excited than she was. She needed a few more days to process the shock and magnitude of what had transpired.

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BACKSTORY (CONT.)

Marcia's experience is the reason the words "chance of a lifetime" were ever strung together in the first place. She's got to move to New York! She's quitting her job, giving up her apartment, saying goodbye to everything and everyone familiar and trusting God to provide for her financial needs until further notice. It's a big risk for her, a HUGE risk, without a safety net. She's ready for the hard work, but has no idea how the provision will come about. Thank God that's not her responsibility.

Big moment for her. Such a big moment that Susana and I got sunburned just basking in the reflection of it. Time for Marcia to "get out of the boat." Marcia's probably already sorry she told me the church pastor story because now she is reminded on all sides that it's time to trust God to literally keep her afloat — mentally, emotionally, and financially.

I thought I'd send this out to all of you, just because if it's half as thrilling to you as it was to us, you'll want to keep your eye on what happens next. **And for those of you who feel called for many barren years to something that seems to have no promise of fulfillment, this miracle is a little more current than Abraham's and Sarah's."**

www.laundryandtosca.com

www.burningheartproductions.com

A BURNING HEART FILM

LAUNDRY AND TOSCA

Sometimes just *following* a dream is enough.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ENDORSEMENTS

“...one of the most beautiful documentaries I’ve ever seen.”

Terrence Berry

Executive Director, Damah Film Festival

“This exquisite film invites us to join Marcia on her compelling journey toward the fulfillment of a dream. Hearing her sing is like entering the throne room of Almighty God – an experience I will never forget. *Laundry and Tosca* is truly a life-changing experience.

Bob Huckins, Director

Windrider Forum at The Sundance Film Festival

“Our congregation’s response to the film, to Marcia’s singing in person, and to Lauralee’s testifying has been overwhelmingly positive. Both Marcia’s and Lauralee’s lives exude passion. Weeks later, the aroma of their passion for the Lord lingers on in the individual and collective memories of our church.”

Rev. Dr. Ken Fong

Senior Pastor, Evergreen Church of Los Angeles, Rosemead, CA

“*Laundry and Tosca* is an absorbing account of friendship and the pursuit of God’s call. Filmmaker Lauralee Farrer has captured the struggle associated with pursuing a rare artistic gift. In the process, she exhibits her own. Yet, both the filmmaker and her subject, Marcia Whitehead, demonstrate the two qualities that lie at the heart of fulfilling a sacred call: humility and joy. The Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts gave an entire evening at a recent conference in Sun Valley, Idaho to the screening of this film and a live performance by Marcia Whitehead. The combination of film and music, with live commentary by the filmmaker, made for an inspirational and moving event. It was the artistic highlight of our conference.”

Dr. Clayton Schmit

*Academic Director
Brehm Center for Worship, Theology and the Arts
Fuller Theological Seminary*

“...that’s the most powerful evangelism I’ve seen in a long time.”

Presbyterian Pastor

and Santa Fe Film Festival attendee

“The story is so moving and deeply transforming. I couldn’t get the hope and power of Marcia’s life-changing experiences out of my head for many weeks. This story should be told and sung and shown as much as possible to every age group. Thank you for adding something important to the Kingdom.”

Jim Steinwedell, PhD

Marriage and Family Therapist

“One of the most wonderful services of my 27 years in ministry. The combination of the film *Laundry and Tosca*, the singing by Marcia Whitehead, and the commentary by filmmaker Lauralee Farrer provided for a terrific blend of art, spirit, and substance. The film is top notch, Marcia’s singing will deeply impact anyone who hears her and Lauralee’s commentary delivers insight between songs that inspire. This exposed our church to a new dimension of artistic endeavor and challenge to rise to the pursuit of dreams.”

Jim Johnston

*Senior Pastor, Renaissance City Church,
Pasadena, CA*

“...a film by a woman, about a woman called by God to sing for His glory. How can you resist the offer to translate into Arabic and broadcast throughout the Middle East?”

Film Distribution Executive

www.laundryandtosca.com

www.burningheartproductions.com

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ENDORSEMENTS (CONT.)

"Marcia's story in *Laundry and Tosca* is Indiana Jones stepping out into nothingness [*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*], hoping that the bridge creates itself under foot. There are no guarantees in this kind of risk, but the filmmaker's point is that it's worth the effort even if your dream gets changed in the process. There's a wonderful sub-theme going on here, too: the film could have been called *Three Women Laughing* because it's also the story of how community is necessary for us to reach the goal of a rich life. Congratulations, you three."

Jack Hafer

Producer, Boulevard Pictures, *To End All Wars*

"...crossed all cultural and language boundaries and brought the room to tears. One of my top ten "unseen" films of 2005."

Film Critic

"One might wonder what is so interesting about the tale of yet another aspiring artist. Yet, this film can provide a profound experience just screening it in your home. It's much more than just a half hour documentary—it's an event for the student body of any college or graduate institution, Christian or otherwise. It addresses something that seems to hit at the heart of an unaddressed issue in our culture—the desire for a life of meaning. We hosted two evenings of screening the film, having the filmmaker Lauralee Farrer speak, and subject Marcia Whitehead sing. The effect was so powerful, so inspirational that we consider it a prime example of what our center exists to sponsor into the art and faith community."

Dr. J. Frederick Davison

Executive Director

Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts
Fuller Theological Seminary

"...hits at the heart of an unaddressed issue in our culture: the desire for a life of meaning."

Graduate School Executive

"I saw *Laundry and Tosca* last night with my wife and four friends—everyone was moved to tears. They found the story compelling, and into discussion it went. That is one of the powerful parts of this film—it's ability to stimulate important discussion."

Rob Johnston

Author, *Reel Spirituality*, *Finding God in the Movies*, *Useless Beauty* and others.

"...more than just a film and a singer. A life-changing experience."

Conference Executive

"The film, an elegant and down-to-earth documentary, tells a quintessentially American story — from the first simple narration and scenes from the laundry room to the singer's performance on stage at the end of the film — a story about rising from the humble hardscramble of a life lived in the everyday — of a woman living into her deeper sense of vocation. Franco Iglesias' heartfelt naming of Marcia's gift was memorable and moving. To live into that naming is the trick, and Marcia seems to be doing that all the way through the film. Is there anything more American than this — to freely explore the possibility that I might be called to greatness out of humble beginnings. Beyond the bedrock question is the nuance of the American religious soul: If I do attain greatness, it doesn't belong to me, but to God and the people."

Bruce Herman

Department of Art, Gordon College

"...left me loving opera when I never have before, and loving Marcia Whitehead whom I've never met. She is all of us who have relatively mundane lives with real dreams and aspirations alive inside of us."

Mother and film festival attendee

"...I don't know what you're doing to people in there, but they go in normal and come out crying and saying their lives have been changed."

Film festival usher

"...it's got more story and drama than many feature films I've seen, presented in such a masterful way that it blurs the lines of literal and fiction, and left me thinking I could do the unachievable."

Film Festival audience member

"Whitehead performed brilliantly to a packed house... one can hardly breathe for the beauty of that voice."

Indianapolis' Criterion

"A divinely-endowed voice. Whitehead's voice is unusually powerful. She captivated an audience, piercing the hearts and emotions of her audience."

NJ Suburban Trends

"...the mesmerizing, unearthly beautiful voice of Marcia Whitehead."

"On The Bright Side"

online review

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