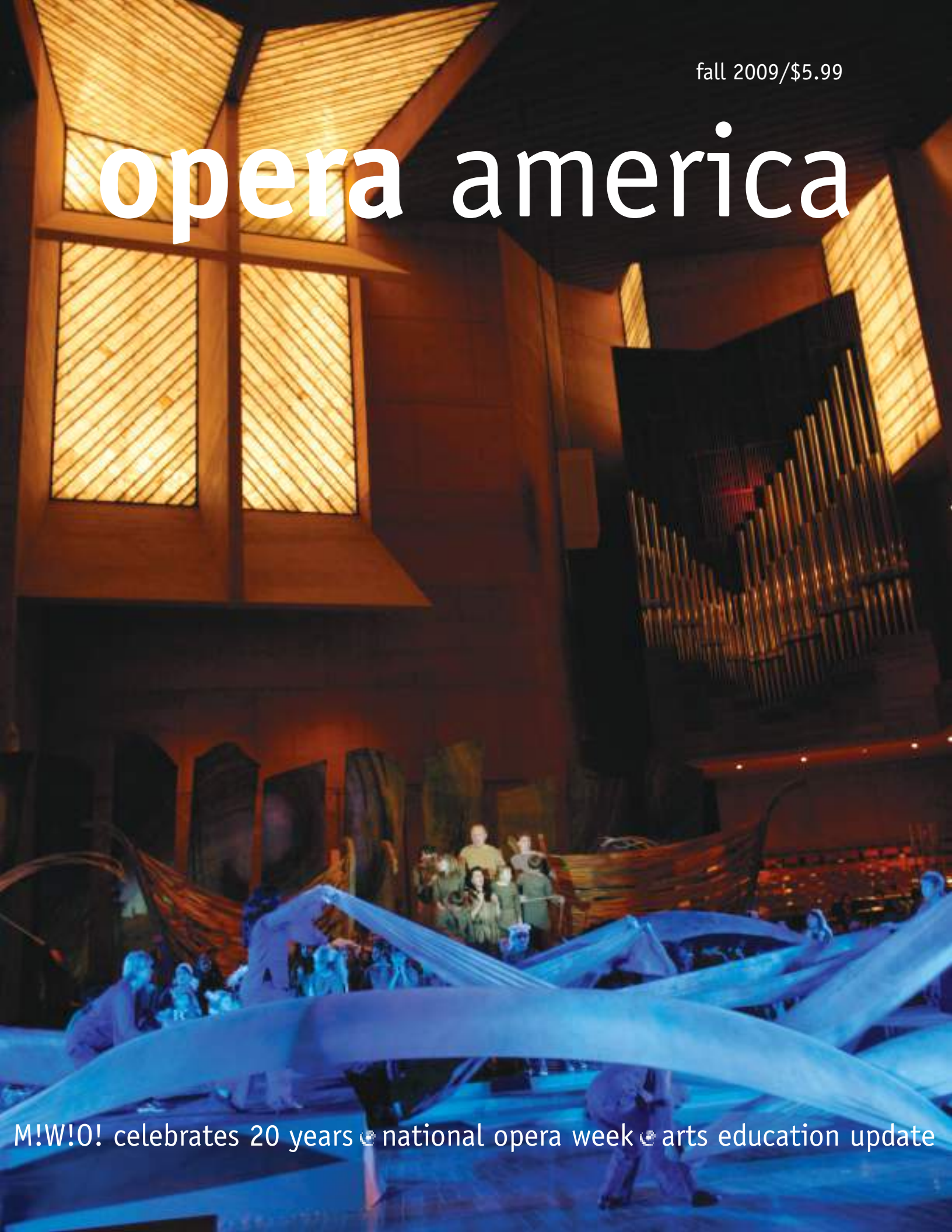


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ON THE COVER: James Johnson as Noye, Beth Clayton as Mrs. Noye, Leighton Saxby as Sem, Andrew Arboleda as Ham, Caleb Barnes as Jaffett, Elizabeth Edel as Mrs. Sem, Catherine Maynes as Mrs. Ham, Rachel Smith-Weinstein as Mrs. Jaffett and members of the community choruses in Los Angeles Opera's 2009 production of Britten's *Noye's Fludde*, directed by Eli Villanueva with design by Lisa Stone (set), Elisabeth Scott (costumes), Jon Gottlieb (sound) and Brian Gale and Jacqueline Reid (lighting). Photo by Robert Millard.

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With this issue of *Opera America*, we kick off the celebration of OPERA America's 40th anniversary of service to the field. So much has changed over the last four decades, it's hard to recall the circumstances that led to our formation.

In 1960, there were about 25 professional opera companies in the United States and Canada. That number nearly doubled by 1970 thanks, in part, to stimulus from the Canada Council and National Endowment for the Arts, established only a few years before (in 1957 and 1965, respectively). As airplanes and air-conditioning led to the distribution of business activity and urban growth across the continent, the arts thrived in cities that had never before been enriched by nonprofit arts organizations.

Things have certainly changed, as we look today at an opera community populated by nearly 150 professional companies, as well as hundreds of smaller companies and educational institutions that produce and perform a broad and expanding repertoire.

Yet, "the more things change, the more they stay the same," as the French saying goes. Interest in increasing the potential for co-production was the motivation behind the establishment of OPERA America in 1970 by 17 opera companies. These companies, most of them mid-sized organizations, needed a central office that could document the existing sets and costumes that were stored in warehouses so other companies could rent, purchase or exchange these productions. Today's comprehensive Production Directory, housed on our new Web site, is the latest version of the first mimeographed directory from 1970. It continues to be one of our most valuable services to the field.

A commitment to new work was also part of the birth of OPERA America. The inaugural meeting took place in Seattle, hosted by Glynn Ross of Seattle Opera. A highlight of the conference was the world premiere of Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*. Today, the North American Works Directory, also found on our new Web site, documents nearly 1,000 American and Canadian operas that have been composed in recent decades, with detailed information about musical forces, technical requirements, photographs, musical excerpts and links to publishers. The commitment to new work demonstrated in 1970 has resulted in the creation of an American and Canadian repertoire. Some of these works are now part of the international opera canon.

Education was another early focus of OPERA America. Opera leaders knew that introducing opera to children was important in building audiences for the future, especially in the years before projected translations. Indeed, the need to overcome opera's negative stereotypes and the barrier of language led opera companies to establish active education programs. OPERA America's textbook and curriculum series, *Music! Words! Opera!*, responded to the need for materials that could be used by classroom teachers to take advantage of the educational richness of opera. This year, as reported by Clifford Books and Roger Ames in this issue, we mark the 20th anniversary *Music! Words! Opera!*.

In this issue, we also profile the winners of the 2009 NEA Opera Honors. Each of them, as you will read, has played a fundamental role in the growth and development of the field and the art form. The legacy of their talent, determination and leadership gives us cause for celebrating our 40th anniversary and the dynamic field we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc A. Scorca". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO



Raymond Ayers as Lord Henry and Jorge Garza as Dorian in Center City Opera Theater's 2007 production of Liebermann's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Photo by Harry Abraham.


“A DIFFERENT KIND OF ENERGY.”

“Everything boils down to three ideas: new work, new artists, new audiences,” explains Andrew Kurtz, who founded **Center City Opera Theater** in 1999. The company joined a thriving opera scene in Philadelphia: “It is a very close-knit community, and all the opera companies are in regular dialogue. Each one has a unique mission and a different niche it’s trying to fill.”

“All the artists working for me are at the earlier stages of their careers,” continues Kurtz. “Some companies have younger artists working alongside more established ones, but when an entire team is younger, it creates a different type of relationship among colleagues. It is a different kind of energy. A lot of people talk about taking a fresh look at the standard rep. These artists do that naturally because they’re not trying to get past the last 10 productions they did — very often it is only their first or second experience with the work.”

Allowing young singers to learn and perform standard repertoire roles “that will be critically important in their careers three or four years down the line” is important, but the company also has a firm commitment to new work. “ConNEXTions” presents what Kurtz describes as fully-staged workshops of works-in-progress or world premiere stagings of new work. “If opera really is music and drama, then the composer and librettist really need to see the whole work. Then they can change and adjust.”

Center City Opera Theater’s upcoming season includes three world premieres, a North American premiere and a Philadelphia premiere, as well as several productions of standard repertory. The focus on new works has led to a partnership with Orchestra 2001, a local new music ensemble that has been around for more than 20 years. Orchestra 2001 provides musicians for all performances and assists with other functions, such as marketing. “It is a perfect meld between two organizations with a strong interest in new rep.”


“We’re a young company trying to learn from our more established peers,” says Kurtz, who is delighted that Center City Opera Theater is now a Professional Company Member of OPERA America. “What makes opera great is that we are collaborative by nature. You can’t put together an opera with one person. It is great to be part of a larger world that is still very small.” 

"WE ARE USED TO REUSING THINGS."

Pittsburgh Opera recently began a new green initiative. "It seemed the right time to pull our weight as citizens," says General Director Christopher Hahn. "There is a particularly encouraging atmosphere for such endeavors in Pittsburgh, an awareness of the need to make old things new in a careful and sustainable way." The primary goal of the initiative is to obtain the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Operations & Maintenance Certification for the company's new headquarters. Pittsburgh Opera, which plans to submit for certification by the end of 2009, will be the first opera company in the United States to earn a LEED certification, and its 1870 building will be the oldest building in Pittsburgh to achieve this special green designation.

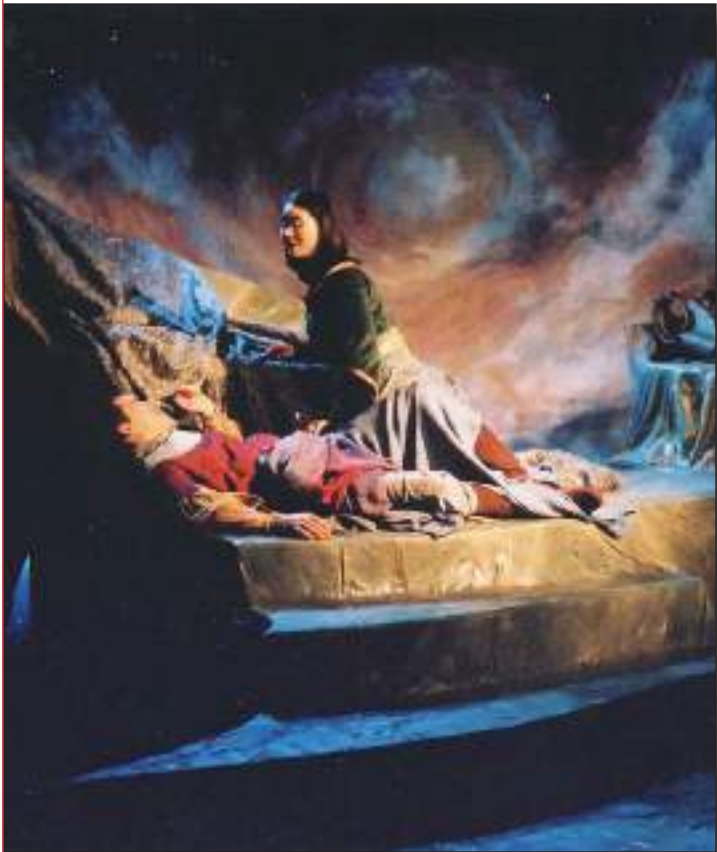
LEED certification is based on a detailed point system. When the company first considered the green initiative, work on the building had already begun. "We brought in a consultant to help us assess the expense," says Hahn. "We were initially very apologetic, but because we are doing the ultimate green thing in repurposing the building, we were further along than we imagined we might be. We in opera generally inhabit a world where we are used to reusing things, so it's second nature to us."

Environmental stewardship is a worthy endeavor in and of itself, but there are other benefits: "When you own a building, you become painfully aware of energy costs," says Hahn. The company's headquarters has already been fitted with several green elements, including occupancy sensors to conserve electricity, window shades to help decrease heating and cooling costs, recycled office materials, the use of green cleaning supplies and the reuse of materials, such as the wood from a renovated staircase used to create a conference room table. The company will also earn a LEED point for its employee wellness program from Highmark in collaboration with The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust Shared Services.

"One can feel a little helpless sometimes, because there are so many things we can't affect," acknowledges Hahn. "Many of us are not in control of our theaters. Stage lighting is tremendously expensive, and there aren't yet alternative technologies. We don't yet have a dry-cleaner locally that would qualify as green. But I think more things will become available as demand increases. We have a green team on staff, and the plan is that every time we're looking at something, we'll ask if there is a greener option." 

Pittsburgh Opera staff members meet around a conference table made from wood reclaimed from an old staircase in its headquarters, a former air brake factory.





Silvana Chu as Morgan Le Fay and Anthony Pulgram as Sir Gawain in Family Opera Initiative's production of Peaslee's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Photo courtesy of Family Opera Initiative.

"I DIDN'T FEEL THAT WAS THEIR PROBLEM."

"I have three children, and when you have children you are introduced to an entirely new set of people, a whole community you would not otherwise have known," says Grethe Barrett Holby, founder and executive artistic director of **Family Opera Initiative**, a program of **Ardea Arts**. "None of these other parents were interested in opera, and I didn't feel that was their problem — I felt it was our problem."

Holby, who has a background in dance, says the opera world needs more works like *The Nutcracker*. Not only does Tchaikovsky's Christmas ballet provide a reliable annual box office boost for ballet companies, she says, "It brings people to the theater. It becomes a family ritual. It gives us a common basis for discussion around the dinner table." Holby began Family Opera Initiative in 1995 as an offshoot of American Opera Projects with the goal of creating more works that allow for such multi-generational participation. "Opera has *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, but we need more."

While Family Opera Initiative develops works designed to appeal to all ages, Holby is wary of the "educational" label. "When a dance company does *The Nutcracker*, it is not the education department that puts it on. Of course, it is educational for the children in it, and it is educational for the families that come to see their performances, but it is first and foremost a great dance piece." Family Opera Initiative develops works that allow children to perform alongside established artists so they can "actually experience, in a legitimate way, what it means to be part of a show next to incredible singers."

Community participation is an important strategy, but creating a body of works that "embrace an indigenous vernacular energy and burst forth in our own American-ness" is at the heart of Family Opera Initiative's mission. Holby looks for material that can work on a variety of levels — both accessible for children and thought-provoking for adults. *Animal Tales*, with a libretto by the late George Plimpton and music by Kitty Brazelton, combines classical and R&B vocal styles, along with DJ techniques and Latin percussion. "We need something that speaks directly to a contemporary audience. A work of our time is a great entrée into an art form." Other projects in development include *The Man in the Black Suit*, based on an award-winning story by Stephen King, and a piece based on a picture book by Umberto Eco. 📖



Vancouver Opera staff pitch in (and pitch tents) at the annual Powell Street Festival, in Vancouver. The festival celebrates the arts, culture and heritage of the Japanese Canadian community. Photo courtesy of Vancouver Opera.

“IT IS ONLY FITTING.”

Vancouver Opera will celebrate its 50th anniversary by launching Community Connections, an ambitious new volunteerism initiative. From July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010, company artists, staff, volunteers, supporters and board members have pledged to provide a prodigious 10,000 hours of volunteer service to a variety of charities. Also participating in the Community Connections program are the staff of Vancouver-based resource leader Goldcorp Inc. Goldcorp has made a major gift to Vancouver Opera through a three-year sponsorship, beginning with the 2009-2010 Golden Anniversary season. This first-ever multi-season sponsorship makes Community Connections possible.

“The Community Connections program allows us to celebrate our Golden Anniversary in a unique way,” says General Director James W. Wright. Organizations that will benefit from this landmark commitment include the Powell Street Festival, Habitat for Humanity, Run 4 the Cure, Vancouver Food Bank and Power To Be Adventure Therapy. A full list of participating organizations is available at www.vancouveropera.ca. In addition, any other volunteer service performed by Vancouver Opera supporters for organizations beyond this list will be recognized under the Community Connections program.

“During the company’s 50 years, audiences of all ages have embraced the work that we have presented,” says Director of Marketing and Community Programs Doug Tuck. “Our mainstage productions, education programs, touring performances and community engagement events reach widely and deeply into communities throughout B.C. It is only fitting that we honor the support of those communities by connecting with them in new ways through our volunteer work.”

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David O'Dell became **Amarillo Opera's** new general director effective September 1. O'Dell's experience in opera and the performing arts spans almost three decades. Prior to his recent position as executive director of San Antonio Opera, he served as general director of Triangle Opera (serving the Research Triangle Park region of North Carolina), Magnolia Opera Festival and Opera for the Young (serving Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa and Michigan). He is a proficient instrumentalist/arranger, conductor, operatic performer and producer, and has worked with Opera Theater of Saint Louis, The Santa Fe Opera and the San Francisco Opera Center.

Elena Reinert has been named **Chicago Opera Theater's** director of development. She replaces Marla Krupman, currently the director of individual giving at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. Reinert has a background in arts fundraising, having previously held positions with the Goodman Theatre and most recently the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as the director of governing member gifts. Reinert was also a project consultant with KlearSky Solutions, and managed development system utilization and implementation projects at several other arts organizations around the Midwest. Reinert has a B.S. in communications from Northwestern University and is currently pursuing her M.B.A. at the Kellogg School of Management.

John J. Toia has been appointed to the newly-created position of associate director of production at **The Dallas Opera**, effective August 1. Toia comes to the company with an M.F.A. in stage management and lighting design from Florida State University; 20 years experience at the North Carolina School of the Arts as director of stage management and assistant dean to the School of Design and Production; and three years experience as production manager of Piedmont Opera Theatre. For the past 30 years, he has also served on the stage management teams of dozens of productions. The company's former Director of Artistic Administration **Jonathan Pell** has been promoted to serve as artistic director of the company, a position last held by Maestro Nicola Rescigno, one of the company's co-founders. Pell came to The Dallas Opera 24 years ago from WNET/Thirteen in New York City, where he worked as coordinating producer for music programming.

James E. Schaeffer, executive director of **Long Leaf Opera** (LLO) stepped down effective July 1. Schaeffer led the company since October 2005. During his tenure, LLO mounted 21 productions, including seven world premieres. Schaeffer will retain his position as general director of New York's **Center for Contemporary Opera**, which he assumed in the spring of 2008. A retired Air Force senior officer, Schaeffer is a bassoonist,

conductor and composer whose works have been performed at the American Dance Festival, among other venues.

The contract for **Larry Desrochers**, general director and CEO of **Manitoba Opera**, has been extended for another three years, expiring June 30, 2012. Desrochers has held the senior administrative and artistic position with the company since February 2001, when he was hired to lead the organization's rebuilding strategy. Under his leadership, the company has balanced its budget for eight consecutive years. Other achievements under his direction include the commissioning of the company's first mainstage opera, *Transit of Venus*; the presentation of the North American premiere of *Jason and Hanna*, the first opera featuring child performers in lead roles in Manitoba; as well as attracting internationally acclaimed Canadian opera artists to the company. Desrochers was born in Manitoba and is a graduate of the University of Winnipeg theater program. His 25-year career spans work in theater, festivals, film, events and opera.

Lyndon Terracini has accepted the position of artistic director of **Opera Australia**, effective October 2009. Terracini made his debut as a baritone in 1976 as Sid in *Albert Herring* with the Australian Opera. Over the next 20 years he worked both internationally and in Australia

with a variety of opera companies in a broad range of traditional and contemporary repertoire, including major baritone roles in *Carmen*, *Don Quixote*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Sweeney Todd* and *La bohème*. In 1993, Terracini founded the Northern Rivers Performance Arts Company and in 2000 was appointed artistic director and CEO of the Queensland Music Festival.

Dean Williamson, who has served as **Opera Cleveland's** artistic director since January 2008, will extend his tenure through June 2012. Williamson has conducted repertoire such as *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Pagliacci*, *Così fan tutte* and *La bohème* for companies including Seattle Opera, Opera Colorado, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Wolf Trap Opera and Chautauqua Opera. Until 2002, he served as music director and conductor of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program and for 12 years was principal coach and pianist for Seattle Opera. Williamson was also music director of the Washington East Opera and artistic director of the Viva Voce Song Recital Series with the Northwest Chamber Orchestra.

Pittsburgh Opera Director of Education **Marilyn Egan** was presented the Excellence in Arts Education Award at the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council's The Work

of Art Awards on June 1. The Excellence in Arts Education Award honors an individual or organization in the greater Pittsburgh area who has shown exceptional dedication to the implementation of excellence in arts education. Egan was nominated by Emily Dadisman, a Pittsburgh Opera Academy member from Central Greene School District, for her efforts to grow the quality and reach of Pittsburgh Opera's education programs by helping educators integrate the arts meaningfully into all subject areas. In addition to her work with Pittsburgh Opera, Egan also works extensively with the Arts Education Collaborative, is a member of the Pittsburgh Public Schools Arts Working Committee and hosts a weekly radio show for Radio Information Service.

Seattle Opera General Director **Speight Jenkins** will be one of five recipients of a 2009 Mayor's Arts Award. The public nominates candidates for these awards, and the Seattle Arts Commission reviews the nominations and makes recommendations for the mayor's final selection. In 2009, the Seattle Arts Commission reviewed a record 360 public nominations. Under Jenkins's leadership, Seattle Opera's productions have raised the profile of Seattle as a thriving arts city. He has strengthened and extended the company's reputation as a Wagner center — producing all 10

of Wagner's major operas, including two very different *Ring* productions. In August 2009, the company again presented the *Ring* cycle, which typically generates more than \$8 million in economic benefits for the city. This summer's production brought visitors to Seattle from 22 countries, 46 states and eight Canadian provinces.

Washington National Opera (WNO) announced that **Jane Lipton Cafritz** has been appointed chairman of the company's board of trustees, effective July 1. Cafritz succeeds John J. Pohanka, who has served as chairman for four years. A member of WNO's board of trustees since 2002, Cafritz possesses experience in nonprofit governance and is an ardent supporter of arts and culture in Washington, D.C. She has been an advocate and spokesperson for WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, a two-year professional training program which cultivates the next generation of opera talent. Cafritz also serves on the Smithsonian National Board of Trustees, the Blair House Board of Trustees, the Board of the National Symphony Orchestra and the Advisory Board of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation. She is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Suffolk University Law School and has an L.L.M. degree in taxation from Georgetown University Law Center. 📄

ONLINE LEARNING

Online Learning offers an opportunity to explore the many dimensions of opera — literature, music, visual art — as well as the artists who make a night at the opera truly unforgettable. This season, an epic new course will debut in conjunction with LA Opera's first complete staging of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and *Opera Conference 2010* in Los Angeles. This course will provide a comprehensive entry into the complex, labyrinthine and endlessly fascinating world that Wagner created through his extraordinary synthesis of the arts. In keeping with the *Ring's* scope, this course will offer eight full lectures, covering: background on Wagner, his musical methods and mythological sources; the history of *Ring* productions; and individual introductions to each of the cycle's four operas. The season also includes a revival of a popular course on Puccini's *La bohème*, a timeless classic that illustrates the joys, sorrows and conflicts of artists and everyday people. The interactive courses are free to OPERA America members and \$10 for all others. For more information, visit www.operaamerica.org.

SAVE THE DATE

Opera Conference 2010: New Realities | New Strategies will take place in Los Angeles from June 9-12 and will be held in conjunction with LA Opera's new production of *The Ring*, which runs from June 8-16.



Baritone Robert Orth sings the work of composer Daron Hagen at OPERA America's March 18, 2009 *Salon Series* event. Photo by Katherine L. Ehle/OPERA America.

SALON SERIES

The *Salon Series* presents live performances of new works in OPERA America's intimate New York office. Hosted in conjunction with OPERA America's publisher members, the *Series* also offers an opportunity to hear from the works' creators and to mingle with other new works aficionados over wine and cheese. On September 16, 2009, excerpts from Stewart Wallace and Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* will be presented in collaboration with Schott Music NY. Additional events will take place on November 4, 2009 and February 10, 2010. Mark your calendars now so that you can join these special evenings.

OPERA AMERICA MEMBERS RECEIVE STIMULUS FUNDS

Sixteen OPERA America member companies, as well as OPERA America itself, received a total of \$725,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Acts. The grants support the preservation of jobs that are threatened by declines in philanthropic and other support during the current economic downturn. Companies receiving funding include Anchorage Opera Company, Opera Boston, Central City Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, Long Beach Opera, Madison Opera, The Minnesota Opera, New York City Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Opera Idaho, Opera Omaha, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Pensacola Opera, The Santa Fe Opera and Tulsa Opera.

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Pin the Tail on the Arts Education Donkey: Where Does Opera Fit in K-12 Public Education Today?

By Richard Kessler

Annual Yearly Progress. NCLB. ELL. Merit Pay. Alternative Certification. Teach for America. Performance Assessment. Credit Recovery. CTE. The Achievement Gap. PISA. International Baccalaureate. Charter Schools. Graduation Rates. IEP. Mayoral Control. Principal Empowerment. STEM.

These are just a few of the terms of art found in K-12 public education in America today.

So, you're at an opera company. Perhaps you're director of education, or chair of the education committee or even general director, and you're wondering what, *if anything*, your K-12 education programs could or should be doing differently to connect to and address key issues. You *know* the discourse on K-12 public education has changed dramatically in the past few years, but you're not exactly sure how your opera company's approach should change in response. What you read in the newspaper often seems worlds away from what you thought you knew about schools.

Much of the field of arts education as we know it began in the mid-1970s. Before then, things were relatively simple, as the vast majority of public schools provided a quality music education, and while there

were certainly concerns back then over equality, test scores, dropout prevention, etc., it was a much easier time to connect with public schools. For the most part, opera companies and symphony orchestras offered student matinees.

The 70s onward witnessed a significant period of decline in music and arts education, caused by a nasty cocktail: part budget, part values and part policy. Some districts suffered significant fiscal issues, leading to layoffs of arts teachers, which urban districts in particular have never recovered from. The once deep pre-service training programs for elementary classroom teachers, which established rudimentary knowledge of piano, fell by the wayside, partly a result of policies intended to ensure that *only* certified arts teachers teach the arts. And of course, reading and math, the most easily measured subjects, with longest standing histories of testing based upon standardized measurements, grew increasingly dominant as the *real* core subjects on the basis of practice and politics. This led to the relegating of subjects such as music, art, theater and even science to the very back of the school bus. Some know this as the "back to basics movement."

Today, K-12 education has a lot of haves and have-nots: The issue that concerns people in the arts field

the most is that of equity. Quality of instruction and access is a major issue too. While it's easy to quip that there is *no* music in the schools, well, in fact, that's just not accurate. Rather, it is a Dickensian world, the best of times and the worst of times, one where on average, suburban districts do a much better job of providing the arts than urban districts, and schools with populations on the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum, as well as low-performing schools, often deny their students a well-rounded education that includes the arts.

And of course, the rub is that many of the kids in low-performing schools are often in poor neighborhoods, where parents are unable to provide arts outside of school, so you end up with the situation that Arne Duncan, U.S. education secretary, has so ably described: "Children who often need the most access have it the least."

Today, K-12 public schools have become a proving ground for those who espouse a free market in schools. Where once such theories were the province of for-profit business, public schools are now less about subject matter and more about systems of change and theories of free market and competition.

In 1955, the economist Milton Friedman wrote a piece envisioning a free market school system. Today's

charter schools vouchers and choice are closely related to the Friedman vision. What is more, certain things that have been commonplace in the for-profit world, such as merit pay, have now been brought into the world of K-12 public education. The merit pay in this case is almost certainly tied or intended to be tied to standardized test scores in reading and math. Those test scores, essentially, are the market indicators.

Up until very recently, schools and school systems were known as being hierarchical, from the elected school board to the superintendent, and what is in effect a chain of command leading downwards to the school principal, eventually to the classroom teacher. Today, the landscape is more and more about school principals who are being empowered to run schools without interference from above (the principal as CEO), or below (the teachers and parents); charter schools (outside of the school district supervision); and variants of choice, meaning charter schools, vouchers and other interventions that disrupt the old notion of schools zoned to admit children within certain geographic boundaries (the neighborhood school). This is best exemplified by one big city mayor, who when recently referring to the local school system said, "Show me competition and I will show you improvement."

But wait, there's more! However, I think you've got the point, being that the K-12 landscape is on the surface less friendly to the arts than before, constantly changing and more political than ever. If policy makers are talking less about subject matter, and more about technical and political solutions, where does music and opera fit in?

Naturally, there is no simple answer to navigating these waters. That being said, there are a few approaches to consider that can help ensure that you and your company are connected to the schools in a way that helps provide the mission critical context necessary for well-informed decision making.

1 Establish an advisory committee of local K-12 educators, school board members, teachers, parents and even students. This could be a free-standing committee or an expansion of an already-existing education committee. I am often surprised by how many cultural organizations involved with K-12 education have what is really marginal representation from the K-12 community in its umbrella of board and advisory committees. It's a great opportunity to expand your community while gaining access to key "intel" from those in the K-12 trenches.

2 Conduct a needs assessment. People love to be asked their expert opinion. This is a great way to gauge what matters most to your K-12 education community. It's key to understanding the nexus between what the schools want and need and what your company has to offer. Technology has made these types of research approaches much easier to do via Web-based software such as Survey Monkey. There is a pretty wide spectrum here, from the lighter touch which resembles market surveys to a full bore needs assessment that might be used to develop a new education plan.

3 Think about new programs for school leaders. While programs for principals have traditionally been challenging, due in large part to

the time constraints placed upon school leaders, these days principals and assistant principals are being granted greater *authority and responsibility than ever before*. It's a good idea to recalibrate what you offer and how you relate to these educators who make the key decisions.

For many arts education advocates, the area of 21st-century skills, something that falls smack into the category of "everything old is new again," is just the anchor they've been looking for amidst the sturm und drang. Spearheaded by a national organization, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, P21 as it's known in the field, is sweeping the state departments of education, partnering with politicians, administrators, educators and businesses to rewrite state learning standards. These rewritten learning standards are promoting a framework that "presents a holistic view of 21st-century teaching and learning that combines a discrete focus on 21st-century student outcomes (a blending of specific skills, content knowledge, expertise and literacies) with innovative support systems to help students master the multi-dimensional abilities required of them in the 21st century."

So where does opera fit in with P21? OK, first off, P21 recognizes and affirms the arts as being a core subject. Great (then again, so did No Child Left Behind). Then, among their stated outcomes are "creativity and innovation; critical thinking and problem solving; and communication and collaboration." They are also focusing on "life skills," among others.

The rap on P21 is that while it is big on "skills" such as critical thinking, it appears to come up short in bringing

content to the table, much like having everything in place to mount an opera except a libretto.

Arts education advocates rejoice at P21's highlighting "creativity and innovation," and while the relationship between P21 and the arts has been quite nascent, entreaties are being made between the arts field and P21. It does seem a good bet that opera could really animate the content in the P21 movement, while also bringing to bear practical skills that abound throughout opera. It's just possible that something such as opera is what's missing from P21.

On a fundamental level, opera has a lot going for it in terms of K-12 education. Among the classical performing arts, opera has the most to offer: music, libretti, theater/acting, costume, set and lighting design, etc., and in terms of new opera in particular, the ability to directly communicate recent history

and literature. Whether it be *Nixon in China*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Moby-Dick* or any number of other works that provide a high level of cultural relevance, you have something that is ready made to be threaded across the curriculum.

Of course, there will always be a need and a market for high quality teacher professional development. Additionally, the advent of high-definition transmission into schools may open up doors to partnering with schools in ways unimaginable just a few years ago.

It's worth a moment to look beyond K-12. After all, while K-12 is important in and of itself, particularly in the need to build and sustain vibrant communities of teaching and learning that provide a high quality, sound, basic and accountable education for all of its students, K-12 is only a temporary destination for what we hope would be a lifetime of learning.

Perhaps a question to be asked is how the opera community will help to create lifelong opportunities for people to be directly involved in the creation and performance of opera, in addition to, naturally, that of being an audience member or opera consumer. Does the opportunity to be an active part of opera conclude when you change careers, or you've finished with your original opera in school? As K-12 continues to expand to K-16, and beyond, there will be a role for opera, if the field takes the initiative.

For me, education is ultimately about developing citizens who are prepared to be active and productive members of a democracy. Can and should opera be part of that? You betcha. 🍷

Richard Kessler is executive director of The Center for Arts Education in New York City.

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Music! Words! Opera! Celebrates 20 Years

By Clifford Brooks and Roger Ames

In one of the first brochures printed to advertise *Music! Words! Opera! (M!W!O!)*, David Gockley, then general director of Houston Grand Opera, stated the following:

“The textbook project [M!W!O!] represents a major change in policy. This is the first time we have asked schools what we can do for them. We are going about this with a real sense of service. The usual way has been to expect education to recognize our greatness and come to our door. Now we’re saying, ‘Here is the way our resources can be used in your classroom, week to week.’”

It all began about 1980, when Marthalie Furber, newly-appointed education director of OPERA America, conducted an environmental scan to discern what was going on in opera education throughout the country. Many of us already involved in company education departments knew of “create an opera” projects in different opera companies. Exciting things were happening in such locales as the Berkshires, San Diego, Tulsa and Tucson. Carroll Reinhart, a pioneer in the field of music education, had observed the work of a colleague in San Diego and began building from a number of creative processes to develop a methodology for children to create their own pieces of musical theater. He shared this with several opera professionals, including Henry Holt. Not long afterward, he was contacted by Marthalie Furber. The discussions began in earnest.

At the same time as the creative process component was being analyzed, other opera companies were heavily engaged in in-depth study of great works as they related to the K-12 curriculum. Schools in Natick, Boston and Lexington, MA had integrated such operas as *Faust*, *Madame Butterfly* and

Hansel and Gretel into their daily instructional strategies. Realizing that both the creative process and the study of great works were intimately bound together and could form the basis of an innovative curriculum where content and process were equally balanced, a number of visionary opera educators set out to develop a collaborative approach to instruction that mirrored the art form itself. The result was an integrated curriculum that started a revolution not only in arts education, but also influenced the education world itself.

The road was not easy. Many in the worlds of general education, music education and opera could not support the idea that children were capable of creating music. The word “opera” itself posed a problem, since its reputation as an elitist art form permeated every level of society. Whether urban or suburban, many did not see how opera could be used to demonstrate the cultural diversity of our society, or serve as an anchor to both the content and context of historical events, periods or characters. The early years saw cognitive psychologists, education gurus, university professors, classroom teachers and opera professionals coming together at a number of meetings to find the best way to approach creating a set of classroom materials that would meet the needs of any K-12 teacher.

Music! Words! Opera! was the first set of sequenced resource materials designed to guide students through discovery of how opera relates to them and how they can create, produce and perform their own works. It was carefully crafted to demonstrate that the processes used to create and produce a work of art are fundamental components of learning. Its success in balancing the study of works by great artists with the creation of original works fostered a dual approach which



M!W!O! trainers Roger Ames and Clifford Brooks lead a training session for Fort Worth Independent School District Teachers. Photos by Michael Rodriguez, Head Photographer & Jo Dufo, Artist/Assistant for ARTSWEEK Fort Worth ISD. Photos courtesy of Fort Worth Opera.

led students to the realization that their thoughts were indeed profound — and that others have shared their concerns and found solutions to problems similar to their own. Students who never before were engaged in school-related activities acknowledged that they themselves had the power to learn and to express their ideas effectively.

Totally innovative at the time, M!W!O! was designed to be used by regular classroom teachers, music specialists or any person interested in teaching about the great works or the creative process in a school system or other similar agency. Since its first appearance in the early 1990s, M!W!O! has been used in extracurricular environments, senior citizen centers, maximum security prisons, juvenile detention centers, colleges and preschools.

There are a number of cognitive, affective, metacognitive and social strategies at work in the M!W!O! process, not to mention memory and the use of psychomotor skills in both the “Listen and Discover” and creative process work. Risk-taking is encouraged, goal setting is mandatory and student motivation remains high through the increased ownership component that builds in each participant during the project.

M!W!O! has proven to be a successful vehicle in language arts and ESL classrooms, where students use new words, drama and gesture to elaborate upon a basic plot synopsis, provide details to help make events and characters come alive, and interact to bring about increased conversation, all of which aids in vocabulary building and promotes self-correction. The kinesthetic, auditory and visual activities built into the lesson plans emphasize interpersonal skills and rely upon teaching strategies which are designed to reach students of diverse learning styles.

While thousands of children and hundreds of teachers nationwide are still using the original curricular materials, there have been numerous requests to add to the original scope of the project and revise the materials to include newer technologies and effective teacher techniques discovered over the past 20 years.

Charles MacKay, while general director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (OTSL), negotiated a development grant from MetLife to begin the revisions. Allison Felter, director of education and outreach programs at OTSL, organized a review committee of teachers and consultants with many years of M!W!O! experience and the critiquing process began.

Members of the review committee shared ideas about lesson plan structures, accompanying recordings and their formats. They discussed requests for new operas, additional guidelines for wider use of the Internet, e-collaboration with OPERA America and its members, and added material for the “Create and Produce” part of the curriculum.

GIA Music of Chicago reviewed the original materials and the revision plan and has agreed to publish and distribute the new materials. These materials will be available to any and all educators — those affiliated with or located near OPERA America members and also those who do not have a company in or near their community.

Each set of materials will be produced with a CD and DVD included, along with an extensive revision of Create and Produce lesson plans and an additional catalog of exercises to further help teachers develop lyrics and compose music with their students. The plan is to publish and distribute one opera title at a time — with adaptable lesson plans for all ages in



each book. The lesson plans are designed to work over a full semester or year's study — however, each can be easily adapted to a middle school's quarter plan of 10 weeks.

The Create and Produce section of each set of lesson plans will offer activities using melodic and lyrical examples of that specific opera to help students model their own work from the opera they are also studying.

The link between a masterwork and the creative project, recommended in the original textbook, is now more direct, and the lesson plans for analysis (Listen and Discover) more closely work in parallel with the lesson plans for modeling and creating (Create and Produce).

Also new to Create and Produce will be exercises focusing on literary structures, masterpiece lyrics from the Broadway tradition and in-depth lessons on dramatic structures and vocabulary for older elementary and secondary students. This new emphasis on language arts should provide more collaborative cross-discipline opportunities for advanced study.

Revisions to the current series deliberately line up with the national standards for music and arts education, which have also undergone their own changes these past few years. One of the overt changes to both components is research strategies that are specifically connected to academic rigor, transfer of knowledge and interdisciplinary education. This rigorous research strand underlines a connection to intellectual pursuits that artists regularly do in their own creative process — but are not often credited for doing.

Bearing in mind that part of the creative process includes study of time and place, style, cultural connections and “finding the way in” to a project (be it musical, poetic, visual, written work or theatrical endeavor), opera as genre provides opportunities for deep analysis and multi-disciplined learning that no other artistic medium can boast. One only has to look at the connections Verdi built between his European education and his increased knowledge of Egypt (while writing *Aida*) to comprehend how necessary research is to fully realize a creative project.

Planned new operas will include *La Cenerentola* and *Turandot*, which will be added to the existing repertoire: *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Magic Flute*, *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Aida* and *Otello*. Other operas, including 20th- and 21st-century American operas, are being considered. When DVDs of such productions are available commercially, the repertoire of *Music! Words! Opera!* will undoubtedly increase.

It is hoped that with the help of a distinguished national publisher of educational materials (GIA), and a new outlook on educational innovation that is emerging from the new administration, the now hundreds of schools participating in *Music! Words! Opera!* will increase to the thousands. In addition, the goal remains that the lives of both teachers and students will be profoundly enriched and often changed by their connection to one of the great art forms — opera, and to the teaching techniques put forward in *M!W!O!*. And it is with gratitude to MetLife, OPERA America's leadership, and the work of authors past and present — coupled with teachers of experience, that we go forward anticipating a dynamic and exciting re-creation of the *M!W!O!* curricular project. 🍷

Teachers Test the New M!W!O!

By Sarah Bryan Miller

Teach children to write operas? The idea may seem daunting, but the with help of OPERA America's *Music! Words! Opera!* (M!W!O!) curriculum, teachers across the country have been doing just that for the last 20 years. M!W!O!'s intense five-day summer course provides teachers with the tools they need to build those operas.

Those tools have been newly honed by the M!W!O! team, composer Roger Ames and word-man Clifford Brooks. A group of 22 teachers-turned-students in Saint Louis got to be the guinea pigs for the latest version of the curriculum.

The revision, said Opera Theatre of Saint Louis Director of Education Allison Felter, takes "all the things that have been learned over the last 20 years and puts them in a format that's more user-friendly."

M!W!O! was born when personal computing was in its infancy. The updated curriculum "boils down to best practices — what we've learned over the last 20 years," said Felter. "We're just conveying it in a format for 21st-century technology."

The group of teachers started by studying a standard opera, and then deconstructing it. One June morning in the recital hall at the University of St. Louis-Missouri, *Turandot* got the treatment. On video, Eva Marton's murderous Princess Turandot grew increasingly annoyed as Plácido Domingo's lovestruck Calaf guessed the answers to her riddles and the mob muttered mutinously in a lavish production by Franco Zeffirelli.

Once Act II ended, the lights went up, and the discussion began, skillfully assisted by Brooks and Ames. It was a more sophisticated version of what these teachers will later help their own students do in the 15-to-20 minute compositions they'll produce.

The conversation zinged around like a pinball, bouncing off topics that included the number of things in this opera that come in threes; the influence of Italian Roman Catholic culture on Zeffirelli's productions; ways to bring childrens' own culture into operatic presentations; operas that use Asian melodies (Brooks delivered an impromptu but thorough lecture on the subject); and just how you're supposed to pronounce *Turandot*, anyway (Brooks believes pronunciation of the final "t" can go either way).

The next stage came after a short break, as the class worked on its own opera in the same way that they'll guide their students in writing theirs. Ames led the way, with tips on texts, using words and rhythms to bring out a character's emotional state and how to get kids thinking melodically.

"Verbs are our hot words," he emphasized, as the teachers wrestled with a text. "If you're not hitting the verbs, it's not working." He inveighed against everyday meters: "It is not incumbent upon us to lock language into boring 4/4 language. Let's not get all first grade about this." Instead, they tried triplets.

Next, "Make a decision about the drama." The meter and the tempo help to set the mood. And never be afraid to offer your own ideas; never, he stresses, settle for mediocrity.

With that decided, it was time to create the music. "Is there an ivory tower we put composers in?" asked Ames. "Give me a break." He ordered the teachers to experiment with singing the first line, then the second, making up a tune on the spot. From there, he went to the piano and played it, complete with chords. By the time the hour ended, the group had a singable aria that carried emotions effectively.

When the class broke for lunch, it was for more than a meal; partners took the opportunity to work on their individual projects. There wasn't a lot of downtime in the day, but the enthusiasm in the room was palpable.

The only suggestion that Mary Murphy had for Ames and Brooks was that it would be nice to spread the class over two less tightly-packed weeks. Murphy, a kindergarten teacher at a parochial school in south St. Louis County, has been a M!W!O! teacher for nine years, enough to take one class from kindergarten to graduation ("Everyone who has attended our school in the last nine years has been involved with opera"), and was on her third round of training.

"It is one of the most thought-provoking, interesting classes I have ever taken in my life," said Murphy. "Even if you have no background in music, you get a lot out of it."

Murphy applauded the changes in the curriculum, which include more hands-on work for students and more themes that can be carried throughout the classroom.

For example, “with *Turandot*,” she notes, “you can study Chinese art, Chinese history and culture, the calendar, math; you can bring in a lot of different avenues. You can also take it up to different grade levels. In other words, you’ve got your goals cut out for the year!”

Susan Wells-Souza teaches music to junior kindergarten through sixth grade classes at an independent school in the city of St. Louis. It’s a special school for promising kids, in which 80 percent of the funding comes from donations.

Along with more use of technology than the original, the updated approach makes more use of collaborative teaching between grade levels and disciplines. “At my school, the first graders are already writing fairy tales,” says Wells-Souza, “so we’re halfway there.” Murphy liked the new possibilities for encouraging students “to work together in a positive way instead of a competitive way.”

Both teachers appreciate the help they get from the opera company. Opera Theatre of Saint Louis provides mentors on request, at no charge, for help in writing librettos, setting them to music and, once the opera’s completed, in staging. “That’s a pretty good deal,” agreed Felter.

Felter reports strongly positive feedback at week’s end. “This new effort, I think, will spark another generation of users,” she observed, adding that the company is now in talks with a publisher. “It has the potential of being pretty darned ubiquitous.”

Murphy summed up the course’s appeal: “It showed me that even at the age of 63, there’s a lot of untapped talent inside of me. The more we can introduce this to the little guys, the more they’re going to use it.

“You’re opening up their minds to so much: art, music, drama. It gets them out of themselves. It’s like opening a door: What’s around it? Wow! Look what’s there!”

Sarah Bryan Miller, the classical music critic of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, is a former professional mezzo-soprano.

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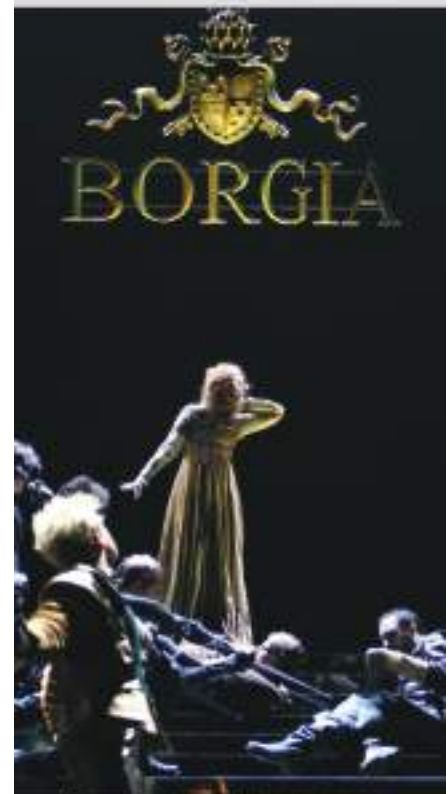


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A Nationwide Celebration of Opera

The National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors, launched in 2008, honors visionary creators, extraordinary performers and other interpreters who have made extraordinary contributions to opera in the United States and have become cultural treasures of the nation. The 2009 recipients are John Adams, Frank Corsaro, Marilyn Horne, Lotfi Mansouri and Julius Rudel. They will be honored at an awards ceremony on November 14, 2009, in Washington, D.C.

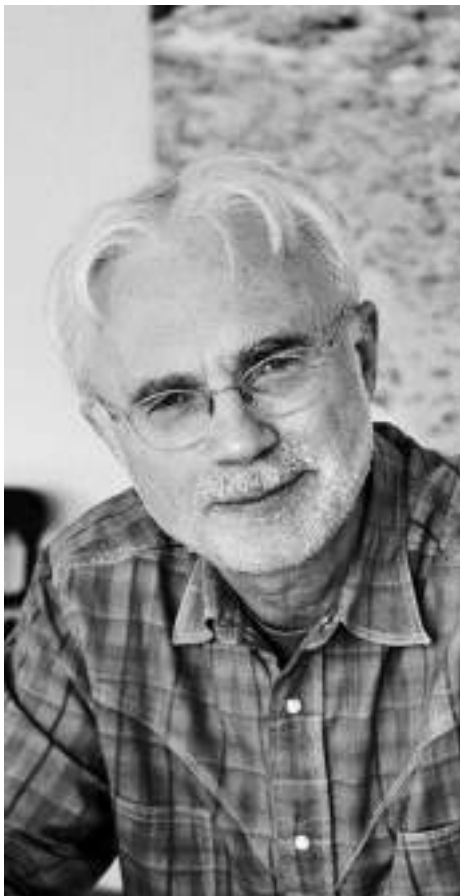
The NEA Opera Honors will be a featured event in the first-ever National Opera Week, which will celebrate the vitality of opera in America as a contemporary cultural expression. The strength and diversity of established opera companies, community opera ensembles and opera training programs across the United States will be shared through a variety of free and accessible activities for opera lovers and newcomers to the art form. The celebration will reach from coast to coast as opera companies offer a range of free programs for the public that demonstrate the allure and accessibility of this most multi-media of the arts. Included within National Opera Week will be other noteworthy events, including the annual *Opera News Awards* and the annual Richard Tucker Music Foundation gala. From open houses, lecture/demonstrations and community performances to the presentation of the nation's highest award in the field, National Opera Week will bring the inventiveness and excitement of opera to a national audience.

With intellectual and emotional intensity, **John Adams** has transformed the operatic landscape. His many works stand out among contemporary classical compositions for their depth of expression, their sonic brilliance and the profoundly humanist nature of their themes. He confronts the conundrums and moral complexities of our time and dares audiences to do the same.

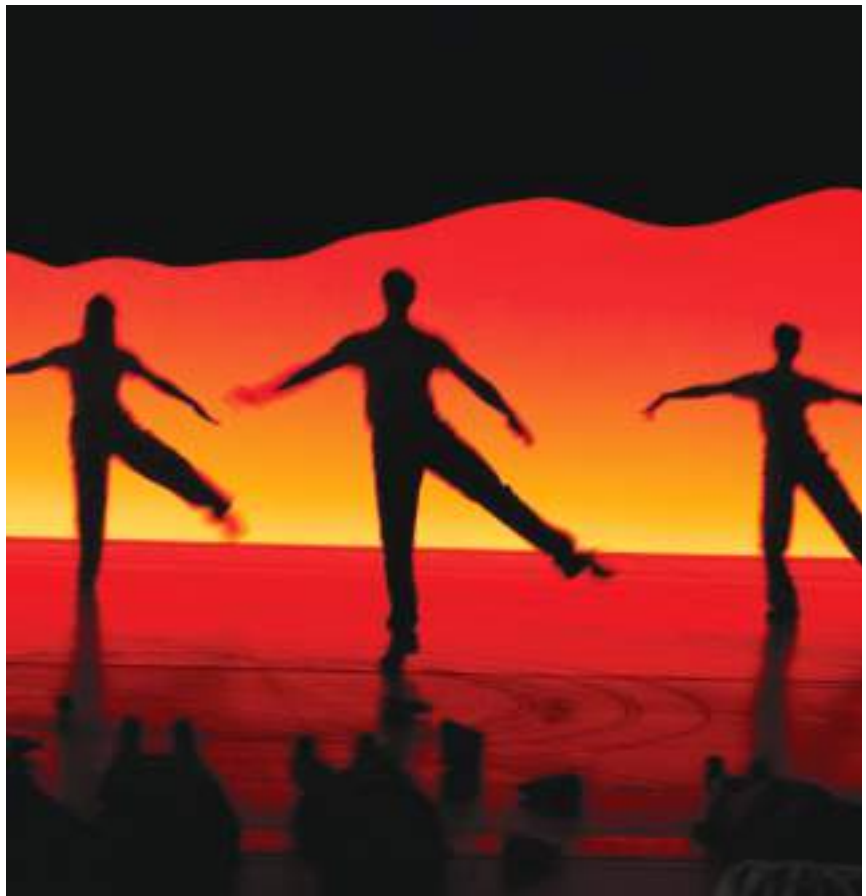
John Adams was born in Worcester, MA, in 1947. By the time he was 13, already an accomplished clarinetist, he was determined to be a composer. After graduating from Harvard, he moved to Northern California and quickly became part of its thriving new music scene. His stage works include *Nixon in China* (1987), *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), *I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the sky* (1995), *El Niño* (2000), *Doctor Atomic* (2005) and *A Flowering Tree* (2006). Among his other works are the song cycle *The Wound-Dresser* (1989), the orchestral pieces *Harmonium* (1981), *Shaker Loops* (1983) and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002).

Adams, who is also a conductor, has been an innovative force within many musical organizations. He instituted the "New and Unusual Music" series at the San Francisco Symphony, where he was composer in residence; served as creative chair for the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and music director of the Cabrillo Festival; and, while occupying the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall, established the annual "In Your Ear" festival. In the coming seasons he will serve as creative chair for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Adams made his literary debut last year with *Hallelujah Junction*, a volume of memoirs and commentary on American musical life.



John Adams. Photo by Margaretta Mitchell.



San Francisco Opera's production of John Adams's *Dr. Atomic*. Photo by Terrence McCarthy.



Frank Corsaro. Photo by Peter Elkus.



New York City Opera's 2006 production of Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*. Photo by Carol Rosegg.

Over the course of more than 50 years, **Frank Corsaro** has brought his keen director's eye to countless opera productions, always displaying a rare understanding for the balance of words and music.

Corsaro, who was born in New York City in 1924, began his career as an actor but turned to directing because it better served his imagination. He became involved with the Actors Studio (which he went on to direct), and in 1955, he directed Mike Grazzo's powerful drama of a war veteran's heroin addiction, *A Hatful of Rain*, which ran for almost a year on Broadway. Julius Rudel invited Corsaro to direct Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* at New York City Opera in 1958. Though the production was a huge success, it was some time before Corsaro returned to opera, in the interim directing, among other things, the Broadway premiere of Tennessee Williams's play *The Night of the Iguana*. But return he did, and he has had a long, rich association with City Opera, as well as with Carlisle Floyd, with whom he has worked at many companies. At City Opera, Corsaro's legendary productions include those of traditional fare such as *La traviata*, *Faust* and *Madama Butterfly*, as well as those of new or lesser-known works, including Lee Hoiby's *Summer and Smoke* and Borodin's *Prince Igor*.

In a rich cross-fertilization, Corsaro moves easily between theater and opera throughout the world. In addition, he has enriched opera in another way — writing libretti for such works as *Heloise and Abelard* by Stephen Paulus, and Thomas Pasatieri's *Frau Margot*.

Marilyn Horne's voice seems to start at the center of the earth and end in the ether. Combining power and flexibility, Horne set a new standard and expanded the repertoire for generations of mezzos to come.

Born in Bradford, PA, in 1934, Marilyn Horne sang almost as soon as she cut baby teeth. At 20, she made an enduring if invisible impression by dubbing Dorothy Dandridge's singing voice in the movie *Carmen Jones*. In 1956, under the guidance of Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, she appeared at the Venice Festival, and soon after joined Germany's Gelsenkirchen Municipal Opera. She returned home in 1960, and made her San Francisco Opera debut as Marie in *Wozzeck*; a year later she made her Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as Lora in the world premiere of Vittorio Giannini's *The Harvest*. Despite those successful 20th-century ventures, she quickly established herself worldwide as a brilliant bel canto interpreter, particularly in operas by Handel and Rossini, many of which she rescued from near obscurity. Equally celebrated and revered for her concert and recital singing, Horne has graced virtually all of the great opera and concert stages of the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala and Carnegie Hall.

The winner of innumerable awards, including the National Medal of the Arts (1992) and the Kennedy Center Honors (1995), she has a second, equally important career as a teacher and guardian of the vocal recital. Through the Marilyn Horne Foundation, which she founded in 1994, young singers receive important training in the art of recital, as well as opportunities to perform.



Marilyn Horne. Photo by David Roth.



Marilyn Horne in the title role in Houston Grand Opera's 1975 production of Handel's *Rinaldo*. Photo by Walt Frerck.



Lotfi Mansouri. Photo courtesy of Columbia Artists Management Inc.



San Francisco Opera's production of Wallace's *Harvey Milk*. Photo courtesy of San Francisco Opera.

He led, brilliantly, two of the most important opera companies in North America, and has directed productions throughout the world. But with one small act, with just one word, **Lotfi Mansouri** forever changed how audiences experienced the art form: supertitles.

He left Teheran, Iran, where he was born in 1929, to study medicine in Los Angeles, but music won out. From 1960 to 1966, he was resident stage director of the Zürich Opera. For the next decade, he served as head stage director at the Geneva Opera, while also directing productions in Europe and the United States. In 1976, Mansouri became general director of the Canadian Opera Company. He introduced Canadian audiences to many works, including *Lulu* and *Death in Venice*, and in 1983, revolutionized opera by ushering in supertitles at a performance of *Elektra*. He moved on to the San Francisco Opera in 1988, where he was general director until 2001. Under Mansouri's leadership, the company established the Pacific Visions program to commission new works and to perform little-known ones. The project led to some of the most compelling operas of our time, including Conrad Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*, André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*.

Julius Rudel took a shoestring company, New York City Opera, and made it a fearless international contender. Furthermore, he promoted and encouraged American opera and American artists at a time when both were in desperate need of cheerleaders.

Though he lived for only 17 years in Vienna, where he was born in 1921, Rudel absorbed its musical traditions and adroitly mixed them with American ones. In 1943, he joined the newly-minted New York City Opera as a rehearsal pianist and soon thereafter made his conducting debut with *The Gypsy Baron*. In his mid-30s, he became the general director/principal conductor of New York City Opera. During his 22-year tenure, imaginative programming, from the baroque to the brand-new, was the rule. Under Rudel, City Opera presented more than 50 20th-century operas, 19 world premieres and seven U.S. premieres, as well as three seasons of all American operas. Productions put equal emphasis on drama and music.

In a career that spans more than six decades and has placed him on podiums throughout the world, Rudel has conducted more than 165 operas, including many at the Metropolitan Opera, over 25 years. His musical scope is vast, but he is perhaps best appreciated for his efforts to revive Kurt Weill's music, including the U.S. premieres of *Die Bürgschaft* and *Silverlake*. Among Rudel's many honors are the *Opera News* Award, Kurt Weill Foundation's Distinguished Achievement Award and New York City's Handel Medallion. He was the first music director of Wolf Trap (Vienna, VA) and the first artistic director of the Kennedy Center, where he commissioned Bernstein's *Mass*. 🇺🇸



Julius Rudel. Photo by J. Henry Fair.



Houston Grand Opera's 1984 production of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*. Photo by Jim Caldwell.

National Opera Open House: Don't Miss This Opportunity!



Opera Company of Philadelphia's 2008 Free Open House drew members of the public, who walked around on the set of DiChiera's *Cyrano*, explored the back-stage areas and orchestra pit, and talked to members of the company's creative staff as well as costumed supernumeraries. Photo by Diane Mattis.

Historic property. Large central space retains many original details. Great for entertaining. Adequate storage. Bathrooms need some updating.

The open house is an important event for those on both sides of a real estate transaction. The purchaser arrives at each property wondering, "Could I be happy here?" The seller does everything possible to make sure the answer is a resounding "Yes" — from greeting visitors with a welcoming smile to filling the place with appealing art.

Many arts organizations have borrowed the idea of the open house, demonstrating to community members that yes, they will enjoy their association with the institution. But an opera company is more than a building — an open house is as likely to be

about providing access to people and ideas as it is about flinging wide the doors of a particular building. "People love getting behind the scenes to see the things we as professionals in the field take for granted," says Tracy Galligher of **Opera Company of Philadelphia**, which has hosted five open house events to date. "It clues them in to the amount of work and preparation that goes in to the art form."

As part of National Opera Week, to be held November 13-22, 2009, OPERA America is encouraging its members to take part in a National Opera Open House. Launched with the presentation of the 2009 NEA Opera Honors in Washington, D.C., the celebration will reach from coast to coast as opera companies offer a range of free programs for the public that demonstrate the allure and accessibility of this most multi-media of the arts.

While the Open House is the key element in a new national initiative, it's hardly a new idea. Rare is the opera company that doesn't supplement its mainstage season with some other kind of introductory programming — whether large-scale outdoor concerts or intimate gatherings at local restaurants and community centers. OPERA America members reported mainstage attendance of 3.6 million in 2007, but with these other events included, total attendance reached 5.3 million. In a world where traditional media are reducing arts coverage at an alarming rate, these programs do not always get the coverage they deserve. National Opera Week is designed to create a kind of critical mass on a national scale and produce a buzz that events in single cities might not otherwise generate.

Make Yourself at Home

For some companies, "Open House" will mean just that. In anticipation of Opera Week, **Boston Lyric Opera** (BLO) has invited the community to a free event at the Shubert Theatre. "We want the community to enjoy a closer experience with their opera company through interactive activities with singers, artists, crew onstage and musicians in the pit," says General & Artistic Director Esther Nelson. "The complexity and creativity of the process is often as interesting to the audience as the result. I believe that it is also important to give something back to our community, which has been very generous during these economically hard times."

BLO's Open House will include events for all ages, including an aria contest. Middle and high schools students will be given a list of famous arias and invited to submit videos of their performances. The company is encouraging a creative approach, and hopes that interpretations will range from classical to rap. The videos will be posted on a special YouTube channel, and finalists, selected by popular vote, will compete at the Open House before a panel of celebrity judges.

The Power of Cross-Promotion

Opera Company of Philadelphia (OCP) frequently partners with the **Curtis Institute** and **Academy of Vocal Arts**, as well as with other opera providers in its city. While the opera company has no performances during Opera Week, both conservatories do. "We've been talking about working together on educational opportunities, because we at OCP have the resources to do that," says Galligher, director of marketing and communications. "In addition to ideas related to their productions, we've also been talking about all the Philadelphia opera lore. It is the birthplace of Marian Anderson, as well as the home of the Mario Lanza

museum, and we'd love to create some kind of online resource."

Houston Grand Opera is among the companies planning to capitalize on their association with this year's NEA Opera Honorees. The company will screen video tributes to this year's honorees on November 13 and 15; in addition, a display from the Houston Grand Opera Archives will document the activities of the honorees at Houston Grand Opera. **San Diego Opera** will host a Twitter Opera Synopsis contest in anticipation of its production of *Nabucco*, which will be directed by Opera Honors recipient Lotfi Mansouri.

New Orleans Opera is partnering with a range of community organizations for Opera Week events. With the New Orleans Museum of Art, the company will sponsor an opera-themed children's art contest. In association with the local NBA team, the Hornets, the company is planning its second Opera Night at the basketball arena. The company will also capitalize on the opportunity to highlight its city's storied opera heritage. "Everyone knows about jazz, but New Orleans is also America's first city of opera," says Janet Wilson, director of marketing and public relations. The Inn on Bourbon, an elegant hotel on the site of one of the city's French opera houses, has embraced this heritage, with spaces christened the Puccini Bar and the Salome Salon. During Opera Week, the Inn will work with the opera company to host performances in its public spaces and hang banners over Bourbon Street. New Orleans Opera will also perform in more casual watering holes in collaboration with **Opera on Tap**, an organization that brings together two common pastimes of the Big Easy.

Location, Location, Location

Sometimes it's best to meet the opera-shy where they are most comfortable. For residents of Louisiana's North Shore, located across Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans, the 40 miles separating them from Crescent City seems further than it is. As part of an effort to build audiences following Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans Opera launched an Orientation Series for North Shore residents, which includes an informal preview at the Tammany Public Library the week before each production. The company rents a bus to take participants to a Sunday matinee. This year, the first such event will take place during National Opera Week, and Wilson hopes the national coverage will help the company attract even more North Shore residents to the opera.

Across the country, opera companies have successfully drawn new audiences to opera performances in




Glorivy Arroyo and Graham Wright perform "A Little Priest" from Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* at Opera Boston Underground at the Lizard Lounge in Cambridge, MA on March 11, 2009. Photo by Mike Ritter.

unlikely venues. **Opera Boston's** Opera Underground, now in its fourth season, will produce a special program for National Opera Week in a local bar. "It will be similar to a typical Opera Underground program, in that it an interactive program featuring young artists, says Director of Development and Marketing William Chapman. "One of the things we've discovered is that the more informal, the less production, the better. It's a club atmosphere, where people are eating and drinking, so a cabaret format is better. At the same time, we've been delighted to discover how far we can move from cabaret material. People love to hear opera scenes in a bar, in a setting that is more familiar to them."

Chicago Opera Theater's Young Artists will present flash performances of popular opera favorites all over the city in locations including Millennium Park, Union Station and various L stops. The company will also present a free performance of Jake Heggie's *At the Statue of Venus* and Wolf-Ferrari's *Susanna's Secret* at the Chicago Cultural Center. Social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, will be used to amplify the buzz around the various events.

Sold!

At press time, more than 70 OPERA America member organizations — ranging from large companies in major cities to small university programs — had committed to participate in National Opera Week, and the plans are as diverse as the companies and the communities they serve. It's not too late for your organization to take part and capitalize on the national buzz. For more information, contact Patricia Kiernan Johnson at PKJohnson@operaamerica.org. 

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LEARNING FROM THE MASTERS



Four artists and a producer walk into a room...no, it's not the latest reality show. OPERA America's *Making Connections* is an artist development program that brings established artists together with emerging professionals to discuss the wide range of skills and experience required for successful careers in opera. In the three years since its inception, *Making Connections* has hosted an array of composers, librettists, singers, producers, designers and directors.

Making Connections also provides networking opportunities following each session in which participants have the opportunity to meet and speak with panel professionals one-on-one. The series is designed to benefit singers, designers, composers, directors, stage managers, librettists and other participants in the operatic field.

The 2009-2010 *Making Connections* season will include nine career development workshops and three masterclasses for singers. Topics that will be covered in the coming season include Audition Advice for Singers, Social Networking in the Life of an Opera Artist, Strategic Planning for Independent Artists, Tax Issues for Artists, and Building and Managing Your Network. The 2009-2010 *Making Connections* season will feature such notable speakers as **Gayletha Nichols** of the Metropolitan Opera, **Bill Palant** of IMG Artists, **Brian Dickie** of Chicago Opera Theater, **Darren K. Woods** of Fort Worth Opera, designer **John Conklin** and mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato**. The series will also include a special masterclass with soprano **Dawn Upshaw**.

Making Connections takes place in OPERA America's office in New York City. For those unable to attend in person, podcasts are available on www.operaamerica.org; selected excerpts from previous sessions appear on the next page.

Crossing from Theater Directing to Opera (September 2008)

NED CANTY, STAGE DIRECTOR

“For me the biggest challenge of working with singers rather than actors has to do with casting. Theater directors usually have a hand in casting, but that’s not often the case in opera. So for a play, you go in already knowing that you have the elements you consider most important, and usually everybody is within five or 10 percent of each other in terms of training and abilities. When you go into an opera rehearsal room you have people who musically are all evenly matched, but one of them could be a very developed actor and the other one might not have the same training. If you haven’t worked with them before, you don’t really know until you walk in there. So the first couple of days are about getting to know the artists and strategizing. One person may need me to describe everything as a color. Another may want me to talk about the arc in the music. This person wants me to talk about what life was like in 1820s Vienna, and that person — I just hope that when he puts the costume on something magical happens. And usually it does.”

Workshopping Your Opera (October 2008) **CHARLES JARDEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS**

“The libretto workshop was a late arrival in our developmental arsenal. For years, we heard from composers that they weren’t interested in hearing the libretto alone because they had their own world to bring to it. But the first time we did a libretto reading the right way (we did a few the wrong way), it was magic. I would say it was the ingredient that changed the course of that particular opera. And the right way to do it is to have actors. Even if it’s going to be an opera, you hire actors and a director who is used to theater to do the workshop. You don’t necessarily treat it as a play; it’s all about workshopping, it’s not about the final product. It’s transformative for the composer to hear lines being read 20 different ways. For us, we’ve had to learn how to collect feedback and how to give that feedback to a composer. It’s not right to just throw all the feedback at the feet of a composer and say, ‘Everybody thinks that character should wear a great hat, so put a green hat on him.’ That’s not what we do. You have to give it to the composer in a way that he or she understands, and that means you really have to have a relationship with the composer. It’s an endless cycle, but it can be inspiring.”

Learning a Role Inside and Out (February 2009)

LAUREN FLANIGAN, SOPRANO

“Every time I start a new opera, I start a notebook. I put information into three categories. The first is what I call ‘the givens.’ What about the opera and your character will never change? You’re always 15, you are in love, you’re a prince, you’re someone’s mother, you commit murder. These are the things that even re-imagining the opera by the director will never change. The second column is: What do I have in common with the character? I’m someone’s daughter, I am educated, I’ve loved and lost, I’ve had a child, etc. The next column is the things I don’t have in common with the character, the things I am going to have to identify, write about and, with the director, create. For instance, I play many characters that murder and I have never committed a murder, so that’s something I have no experience with. Many years ago I did a solo work called *The Passion of Lizzie Borden*. I was having serious trouble with the concept of killing, especially the brutal act of killing with an axe. The director suggested to me that I concentrate on chopping as an act of freedom — a way of freeing myself from the claustrophobic confines of my life. I do know what it’s like to want to free myself from confining circumstances, so that became my acting challenge. It was about chopping my way out of something. I was freeing myself. Over the years I’ve been asked to do a lot on stage that I did not agree with or even understand. I wrote it down, identified it and I worked it out.”

Designing for 21st-Century Opera (May 2009) **WENDALL K. HARRINGTON, PROJECTION DESIGNER**

“This is our task as creators: We are here to create a landscape in which one can dream. And we’re with the most beautiful object, this music, and the music always wins. We are there to bring that music forward, not to say, ‘Pay no attention to what’s going on back there, because I really don’t have any conviction about this, so please watch all of this flashing video.’ That’s the thing we can’t forget. I know everybody’s anxious about money, and the producers want the audience to be happy, but the audience is going to be happy if they learned something about world, art and life that they didn’t know when they came in. That has nothing to do with flash. It has to do with how beautifully sung it is and how sincere the opera-makers are. It’s all sincerity. It’s just like life. So really it’s a question of trusting the material that we have and sticking to the basics. What is the audience putting its money down for? Is it spectacle? Of course everyone wants to have a show of some kind, but the show is the music. And anything that detracts from that in any kind of way is a mistake.”

Photo credits (from top): Ailyn Perez as Gilda and Eric T. Dubin as Rigoletto in the Academy of Vocal Arts production of Verdi’s *Rigoletto* directed by Ned Canty. Photo by Paul Sirochman. • Lauren Flanigan and Teddy Tahu Rhodes in New York City Opera’s concert performance of Barber’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. Photo by Carol Rosegg. • Deanne Meek as Ma Joad in The Minnesota Opera’s production of Gordon’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, projections designed by Wendall K. Harrington.



A LEARNING LABORATORY FOR OPERA

BY ADAM GUSTAFSON

A lot is happening as OPERA America heads into its 40th year, including a virtual facelift. A new Web site design puts OPERA America’s wealth of existing resources, along with some new additions, at the fingertips of its members in a format that is easy to navigate.

The mission of the redesign team was simple: How can we create a Web site that delivers timely news and information about the field along with the tools and resources necessary to enhance every level of opera participation, from creation to presentation to enjoyment?

Upon visiting the new, streamlined homepage, users will immediately note that the simplified layout, along with a redesigned organizational structure, allow users to access the resources they need in a manner that is both intuitive and accommodating.


What has emerged is a dynamic vehicle for the understanding of and participation in the field of opera. The new homepage will host regularly-updated news headlines, network specific articles from OPERA America staff, tutorials about how to best use your OPERA America membership and an improved calendar of events that will keep members abreast of OPERA America’s programs. Combined, these features will put news and information a click away and reduce the need to have as many e-newsletters, which should make already-overcrowded inboxes everywhere a bit easier to tame.

From the homepage, users will be able to access portals that broadly fit their interests, including Artistic and Administrative Professional Development Resources; Education, Audiences and Community Service; and Advocacy and Public Policy. Users will also find immediate access to the most often used Research, Publications and Directories, as well as information about OPERA America.

In order to enhance and expand its role as a professional and audience development tool, several programs will be revamped and new programs will be added to the Web site. Opera lovers looking to brush up on their knowledge of the art form will find an updated Glossary of Terms with audio examples and an expanded *Learning Center* (formerly *Cornerstones*) that will encompass a wide variety of information about the most frequently performed operas in the repertoire. New operas will be added each month to this invaluable learning resource.

A new webinar series will be provided free of charge to professional company members. The webinars, tailored to specialty networks such as development, marketing, finance, education, artistic administration, technical/production and governance, will provide up-to-date, practical advice that can be put to use immediately, empowering users with strategic support to respond to longer-term opportunities and challenges. The webinars allow OPERA America to deliver beneficial programming to as many members as possible in real time, and as a permanent resource. They will supplement, not replace, existing professional development activities.

Administrative staff will also find an online speaker series focusing on various concerns within the field and new virtual conferencing capabilities that will allow staff to share documents during conference calls and other important events. Likewise, artists will be able to access both *Making Connections* and the *Salon Series* online, and they will be able to search OPERA America’s articles about artist career development, including those from *Aria Talk*.

Big things are happening online. If you haven’t been to www.operaamerica.org in a while, you owe it to yourself to give it another try. 

TAKING ACTION TOGETHER: AN UPDATE

June 14 marked the one-year anniversary of the 2008 *National Performing Arts Convention* in Denver. Much has happened since then, including chaos in the global economy, the election of a new President and the proliferation of social networking. And of course, art continues to be made and enjoyed everywhere. A number of strategies for collective action were agreed upon, and even as the world and the arts environment have changed, a great deal of work has been done to forward those goals.

From the cross-disciplinary roundtable discussions and *AmericaSpeaks* Town Hall Meeting, three primary priority action areas were identified as crucial for the future of the performing arts: advocacy, arts education and diversity. NPAC organizers added two additional priorities: artists and technology.

Task forces were formed for each priority area, comprised of diverse groups of artists and arts practitioners from across the country. From February until June, the task forces worked to review NPAC findings, articulate a vision for each priority, and craft a series of short- and long-term actions to achieve the NPAC goals. It quickly became apparent that there is crossover among the priority areas.

Strategies are still being developed for each priority area. The first step is the establishment of a user-friendly, interactive Web-based resource center to include research, links, information, best practices, lessons learned and networking options for all the performing arts in each priority area. This action is in process, spearheaded by the technology task force. While discussions are ongoing, task forces have already made a number of recommendations.

- The platform should include Wiki-style community compositions on particular subjects, content "certified" by a panel of editorial advisers, and commissioned, authoritative knowledge on particular subjects. This platform should also serve as an index of arts and technology, linking to and re-syndicating content from around the Internet.

- It should function as a shared distance learning and professional development infrastructure, delivering specialized content across the performing arts community, and working to further unify the advocacy/arts services sector

- This platform should offer information on technology itself, designed to make technologies understandable, accessible and usable for performing arts professionals.

- The platform should be available for all NPAC task force priority areas and for other NPAC purposes and constituents as a centralized tool for resource sharing and communications for the performing arts community.

Human connections and person-to-person information sharing are critical. To this end, the NPAC follow-up task force is developing strategies to promote multidisciplinary dialogue, whether face-to-face or electronically, nationally or regionally, or in conjunction with existing convenings or other association partners.

In the coming months, you will hear from organizers again about the online resource center, future meeting plans and other specific action steps. In the meantime, feedback and conversation are invited at info@performingartsconvention.org.

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BY ALEXA B. ANTOPOL

**Portrait of a Castrato:
Politics, Patronage, and Music in the
Life of Atto Melani**

Roger Freitas

Cambridge University Press

ISBN 13: 9780521885218

This volume explores the life of the 17th-century musician Atto Melani. Born in 1626 into a bourgeois family in Pistoia, Italy, Melani was castrated to preserve his singing voice and soon rose to both artistic and social prominence. His extant letters not only depict the musical activities of several European centers, they reveal the real-life context of music and the musician: how a singer related to patrons and colleagues, what he thought about his profession and the role music played in his life. Whether Melani was singing, spying, composing or even rejecting his art, his life illustrates how music-making was always also a negotiation for power. In this biography, Roger Freitas provides a glimpse of the social and political contexts of 17th-century music.

The Life of Haydn

David Wyn Jones

Cambridge University Press

ISBN 13: 9780521895743

Historically, Joseph Haydn has been recognized chiefly as the composer who first realized the potential of the symphony and the string quartet. However, Haydn achieved significant fame during his lifetime in many

genres, including opera, oratorio and church music. Too easily buttonholed as a Viennese composer, he interacted consistently with the musical life of Vienna only during the earliest and latest periods of his life; London was at least as important in fashioning the composer's fame and legacy. This biography also probes the darker side of Haydn's personality, his commercial opportunism, his penny-pinching and his troubled marriage.

**Musical Exoticism:
Images and Reflections**

Ralph P. Locke

Cambridge University Press

ISBN 13: 9780521877930

A Japanese geisha, a Middle Eastern caravan, a Hungarian-Gypsy fiddler, Carmen flinging a rose at Don José — portrayals of people and places that are considered somehow exotic have been ubiquitous from 1700 to today, whether in opera, Broadway musicals, instrumental music, film scores, jazz and popular song. Often these portrayals are highly stereotypical but also powerful, indelible and touching — or troubling. *Musical Exoticism* surveys the vast and varied repertoire of Western musical works that evoke exotic locales. It relates trends in musical exoticism to other trends in music, such as program music and avant-garde experimentation, as well as to broader historical developments such as nationalism and empire. Ralph


P. Locke outlines major trends in exotic depiction from the Baroque era onward, and illustrates these trends through close study of numerous works, including operas by Handel and Rameau, Mozart's *Rondo alla turca*, *Madame Butterfly* and *West Side Story*.

**Debussy's Mélisande:
The Lives of Georgette Leblanc,
Mary Garden and Maggie Teyte**

Gillian Opstad

Boydell Press

ISBN 13: 9781843834595

Debussy's Mélisande examines the lives of Georgette Leblanc, Mary Garden and Maggie Teyte, and their involvement with Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, illustrating the prejudices and difficulties women singers of their era faced. These three women were not only remarkable for the resilience and initiative they had to develop, but also for their willingness to adapt themselves to the opportunities offered by the emerging technologies of recording, radio and film. This volume is also the story of the background to the opera's creation, and the frequently stormy relationships between the author of the original play (Maeterlinck), the composer, director, conductor and performers. Gillian Opstad read Modern Languages at Somerville College, Oxford, after which she taught for a number of years in Buckinghamshire and Bristol. 

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

As we kick off our celebration of OPERA America's 40th anniversary, we recognize those individuals whose consistent support has allowed us to sustain and expand our services to the opera field. In particular, we recognize those who have made contributions to OPERA America's Annual Fund for five years or more.

Opera lovers who give direct support to their local opera company can see and hear the results of their generosity every time the curtain goes up. But an opera company is more than sets and singers. Each production represents an enormous amount of preparation and planning. By sharing information and resources with a network of peers across the country, opera professionals can save both time and money, ultimately allowing them to invest more resources in the art they produce. OPERA America supporters recognize the valuable services provided by the national service organization significantly improve the quality of opera seen on their local stages.

Lloyd and Mary Ann Gerlach are deeply involved with Milwaukee's two opera companies, Florentine Opera and The Skylight. The two attended their first OPERA America conference in the 1980s, when Lloyd was serving as president of Florentine Opera, and they have been avid supporters of OPERA America ever since. "I think it's important to recognize the scope of the international opera world. Interchange between companies helps opera production overall," says Lloyd. "We have particularly enjoyed meeting fellow opera trustees and staff members from other opera companies." The Gerlachs have shown keen interest in OPERA America's new works initiatives, and have been generous supporters of *The Opera Fund*, an endowment dedicated to the development of North American opera and music-theater.


Barbara Leirvik also became acquainted with OPERA America while serving on the board of her local opera company. Hungry for more information about "where Cleveland Opera stood in the opera world," she attended an OPERA America conference and found the discussions tremendously engaging. "As an opera lover since childhood, my love of OPERA America is because of its service to the opera world. The proposed Opera Center is key to this and will be the ultimate in keeping opera alive and growing." She and her husband, Ron, are long-time members of the Ambassador Circle. "As a businessman, I have seen Marc and his staff use our gift very effectively and wisely," says Ron. "Barbara and I have appreciated the enthusiasm and efficiency of the entire organization."

Soprano Pamela Hoiles learned of OPERA America through her voice teacher, Myron McPherson. "I'm very interested in singers, and it is wonderful to have an organization that is so supportive of them. The

OPERA America gratefully acknowledges the following donors for their long term and generous support:

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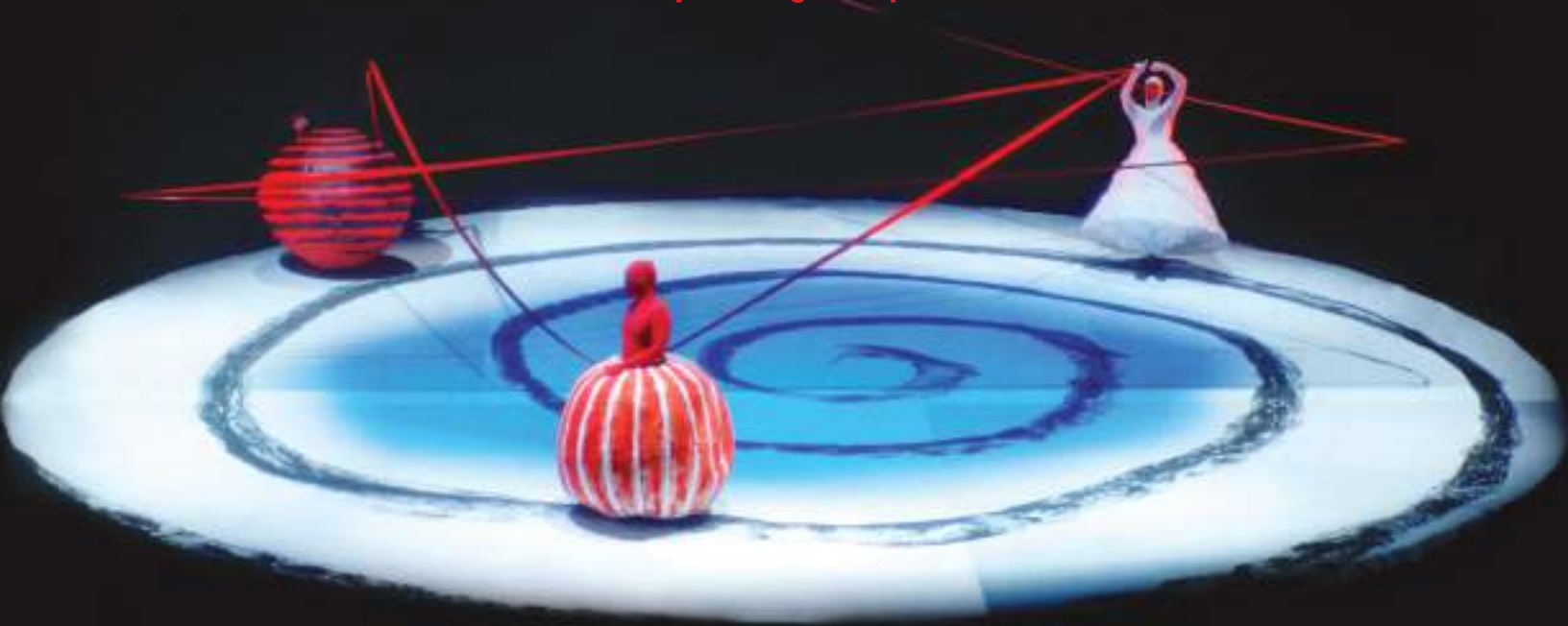
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