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*The magazine of OPERA America — the national service organization for opera, which leads and serves the entire opera community, supporting the creation, presentation and enjoyment of opera.*

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In the "Opera in the Upper Midwest" article in the summer 2011 issue of *Opera America*, Norah Long's name was misspelled. We apologize for the error.

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ON THE COVER: Aaron St.Clair Nicholson as Scotty MacDonald and Frédérique Vézina in the title role of Vancouver Opera's 2010 world premiere production of Estacio's *Lillian Alling*. The production was directed by Kelly Robinson with set and costume designs by Sue LePage and lighting by Harry Frehner. Photo by Tim Matheson.



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September 11 was marked with appropriate solemnity in New York and around the country. It seems incredible that 10 years have passed since that unforgettable day. Wars have been fought, the politics of the Middle East transformed and attitudes about our place in the world changed forever. Over the same 10-year period, opera companies have been trying to find a new footing to adjust to fundamental and irreversible changes.

Thomas Friedman explains in his brilliant book, *The World is Flat*, how changes catalyzed by Y2K and 9/11 resulted in the “convergence of technology and events.” Accelerated globalization now “requires us to run faster in order to stay in place.” Online ticketing, streaming and social networking are a few of the new tools at our disposal, even if we are still trying to figure out how to use them to best advantage. Continued changes in our nation’s demographics, education policies and recreational behaviors make our operating environment even more confusing. Knowing about opera is no longer enough of a qualification to run an opera company; we have to know about the world around us, too.

In light of these profound shifts, we cannot take comfort in thinking that if we work a little harder — or wait a little longer for the economy to improve — we can return to the easier, booming days of the 1990s. None of the forces that are changing our world will be reversed. The few people who claimed the Internet was just a fad have quietly retreated from the debate.

I have attended a number of opera company board meetings recently and am struck by the sharp distinctions between strong boards and weak boards. One of the most important qualities of strong boards is the ability to think strategically about the future. Strong boards assess current civic dynamics; inventory the artistic, human and financial assets of the opera company; understand the potential and challenge of partnerships; appreciate that audience engagement requires work outside the walls of the opera house; and make plans that balance institutional aspirations with sharp analysis of relevant facts. These board meetings are invigorating and yield clear direction for staff and volunteers.

Weak boards, on the other hand, are characterized by a general reluctance to assess the validity of traditions in light of current realities. At these companies, board meetings are dominated by memories of past success and discussion about personal preferences in repertoire and singers. Board members and staff struggle to meet unattainable fundraising goals that were set at unreasonable levels in order to preserve long-established numbers of productions and performances. There is little discussion of new partnerships or alternative repertoire and venues. Audience development is a matter of faith that, eventually, educated adults will come to appreciate grand opera as the greatest of art forms. These board meetings usually end with a dispiriting commitment to examine budgets to find still more short-term cost reductions.

The remarkable *9/11 Commission Report* describes our nation’s vulnerability to the terrorist attack as a “failure of imagination.” Let’s not leave ourselves open to the suggestion that challenges in our field stem from a failure of imagination, since imagination is at the heart of our work. Creativity should animate board meetings and staff meetings as thoroughly as it does production meetings and rehearsals. Effective leaders anticipate future trends and imagine possible responses. As much as we may cherish memories of opera experiences of the past, we must all come to view ourselves as trustees of opera’s future. There is a time and place for commemoration, but now, it’s time for imaginative action.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc A. Scorca". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue rectangular background.

Marc A. Scorca  
President/CEO

**“BEING A PART OF THE BIGGER WHOLE”**

**Golden Gate Opera** (Sausalito, CA) was birthed by a group of professional opera singers, designers and directors who began working together 25 years ago. Their goal was to produce high-quality opera at affordable prices. The opera company was formally incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1996 and has recently been welcomed as a Professional Company Member of OPERA America.

Roberta Wain-Becker, one of the founders and now the artistic director and general manager, says, “Accessibility is Golden Gate Opera’s hallmark.” In addition to fully-staged productions, each season includes a number of “Outreach OPERA-tunities” ranging from school assembly programs to performances at large outdoor venues like the Sausalito Art Festival. “Regardless of the size of the event,” says Wain-Becker, “we are proud of our dedication to quality. No matter what the funding situation, dedicated artists never sacrifice quality.”

More than 50,000 children in the Bay Area have experienced the company’s programs. According to Wain-Becker, “Art is a necessity in our country right now. The powers that be are not offering us examples to live by. The world is in discord. Art is our only hope of bringing people together. In opera, all of the art forms exist together: singing, music, acting, choreography, painting, costume; and every aspect of the human condition is portrayed. When an opera ends, it ends with a resolution and the hint of a new beginning. Everyone who needs to see the bigger picture in life would benefit from the examples found in operas.”

“Through OPERA America,” says Wain-Becker, “it’s been wonderful to connect with other companies around the country. We hope to make OPERA America as proud of its association with Golden Gate Opera as we are of our membership in OPERA America. One of the things that really excites me about being a member is being a part of the bigger whole. I want to talk about opera’s role in the country, as well as opera’s role in the County of Marin.” 🍷



Golden Gate Opera's 2010 production of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. Photo by Ruel Cordero.



Christopher Temporelli as Thomas Colton and William Joyner as William Jackson in Pine Mountain Music Festival's world premiere production of Linkola's *Rockland*. Photo by Monte Consulting.

### **"EVERYONE HERE TOOK IT ON AS THEIR STORY."**

"You don't get an opportunity very often to produce an opera about the very people who will see the opera," says Joshua Major, artistic director of Pine Mountain Music Festival (Hancock, MI). In summer 2011, residents of Michigan's Upper Peninsula witnessed the premiere of *Rockland*. The opera, by composer Jukka Linkola and librettist Jussi Tapola, was inspired by an eyewitness account written by Alfred Laakso, a Finn living in Rockland in 1906. Nearly a century later, his grandson read the account of how two Finnish miners were killed by sheriff's deputies and saw its potential for the stage. He brought the idea to John Kiltinen, who ultimately commissioned the piece. Five years in the making, *Rockland* had its premiere last summer, with performances in Houghton, MI, and at Finland's Nivala Festival.

"The Upper Peninsula has one of the largest populations of Finns outside of Finland," says Major, "and they are very patriotic, very proud of their heritage. Many people today had relatives who worked in the mine at Rockland, or one like it. The buzz in the community was remarkable. Everyone here took it on as their story." But as much as the Upper Peninsula community owned the show, its appeal crossed borders; when the opera was performed in Nivala, says Major, "Lo and behold, everyone in that town took it on as *their* story. And of course, it is — it was their family members who came to America to work in the mines." 🇫🇮

**NEW OPERAS FOR NEW AUDIENCES**

*A number of companies have commissioned new works for youth and family for upcoming seasons.*

**The Atlanta Opera** has commissioned Atlanta-based composer Nicole Chamberlain and librettist Madeleine St. Romain to write a new opera based on the antics of Br'er Rabbit. The Br'er Rabbit stories can be traced back to trickster figures in African folklore, particularly the hare, a character that is prominent in the storytelling traditions of Western, Central and Southern Africa. This production will be a contemporary rendering of several story lines from Native American, African and Cajun folklore. The score will be written for four voice types, and will incorporate melodies and rhythms from African, Native American and Cajun music, as well as the blues. The work, currently entitled ***Rabbit Tales***, will be performed in elementary schools in fall 2011 and spring 2012. There will be a premiere open to the public on October 29, 2011, in conjunction with National Opera Week.

**Ardea Arts/Family Opera Initiative** has commissioned an international and “universe-sal” opera to be created and performed in four languages — American, Russian, Chinese and Martian — based on the picture book for all ages by Umberto Eco and Eugenio Carmi entitled ***The Three Astronauts***. This tale, about the race to be first on Mars and what happens when three competing astronauts arrive at the same time, is a moving, simple and thoughtful metaphor about enemies, friendships and alliances between and among people, nations and universes. The project will be brought to life by three collaborating international creative teams.



Promotional image for Ardea Arts/Family Opera Initiative's upcoming premiere of *The Three Astronauts* by Eugenio Carmi, lead designer.



A costume sketch for Fort Worth Opera's upcoming world premiere production of Davies's *Bremen Town Musicians*, courtesy of costume designer LaLonnie Lehman.

***The Bremen Town Musicians*** is the second opera that has been commissioned for **Fort Worth Opera's** Children's Opera Theatre. John Davies will adapt music of Offenbach, Rossini, Donizetti and Verdi for this retelling of the classic children's tale. Children's Opera Theatre presents fully staged productions throughout the school year; last year, the troupe covered 7,000 miles. During the 2011-2012 school year, the company will tour *The Bremen Town Musicians* in repertory with *Little Red's Most Unusual Day*, also by John Davies.





Storyboard for The Atlanta Opera's upcoming world premiere production of Chamberlain's *Rabbit Tales*. Photo by Park Cofield.

**Tri-Cities Opera** (Binghamton, NY) has announced the world premiere of *Seasons in the Glen* by Chuck Knauf for its 2011-2012 touring education program, *Opera-Go-Round*. This milestone marks the first time the company has mounted a completely new musical piece for its tour. Inspired by the composer's childhood experiences growing up in Owego, NY, the one-act musical play recounts the adventures of four young friends during an entire cycle of the seasons.



A sketch of the curtain for Tri-Cities Opera's upcoming premiere of Knauf's *Seasons in the Glen*, courtesy of set designer Karen M. Kozlowski.

In April 2012, **Opera Southwest** (Albuquerque, NM) will present the premiere performances of the orchestral version of *A Way Home*, first commissioned by Houston Grand Opera for synthesizer, cello and six voices. In response to Opera Southwest's nationwide, first-ever Brabson Young Audiences Opera Composition, composer Ethan Frederick Greene created the first complete orchestration of the work and reduced the number of characters from six to five. This one-act chamber opera will open in Albuquerque at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, with free daytime school performances in addition to performances for the general public.



A set rendering for Opera Southwest's upcoming world premiere production of Greene's *A Way Home*, courtesy of scenic and lighting designer John Malolepsy.

**A NEW HOME FOR ARIZONA OPERA**

**Arizona Opera**, with the city of Phoenix, has purchased a new home in downtown Phoenix. The 16,800 square-foot building, formerly the corporate offices and showroom of Walsh Brothers Furniture, was purchased by the city with funds from 2006 voter-approved bonds. Located in the heart of the city's cultural district, the facility is directly across Central Avenue from the Phoenix Art Museum and Phoenix Theater, and down the block from the Heard Museum. The building will house educational and meeting facilities; rehearsal space for the company's five-opera season; administrative offices; costume, wig and make-up shops; and performance venues for smaller opera and theater works.

"We are thrilled to have found such a perfect location for our new home, near to our sister arts organizations and directly on the light rail route. From watching singers rehearse their roles, to public tours, education programs for youth and adults, performances and events, the community will have unprecedented, behind-the-scenes access to the creative process in action. Now, because of landmark support from Phoenix residents, people of all ages and backgrounds will be able to learn first-hand about this all-encompassing art form," says General Director Scott Altman.

Arizona Opera's production headquarters had been located in Tucson since the company's founding in 1971, with operations split between Tucson and Phoenix. Since July 2010, consolidation of the company occurred with the administrative office in Phoenix and rehearsal space in nearby Mesa. In the new facility, the company will fully consolidate all operations not only in one city, but in one building as well. Performances of the company's full season will continue to be held at Symphony Hall in downtown Phoenix and the Tucson Music Hall. Renovations are expected to be complete and Arizona Opera to be fully operational in the Central Avenue building by summer of 2012. 🍷



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Baritone Adam Barta performs in Boyer's 2011 production of Poulenc's *Les mamelles de Tirésias*. Adam was the winner of the 2011 Graduate Division of the Classical Singer Competition.

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**The Dallas Opera** (TDO) announced several executive-level promotions and new hires as the company prepares for its 55<sup>th</sup> season. After seven years with the company, former director of marketing **Jennifer Schuder** has been promoted to serve the company as chief marketing officer/director of community outreach. She previously served as director of product marketing for Dallas-based true.com, an online dating site where she supervised the development and marketing of the firm’s interactive psychological tests and subsequent derivatives. Schuder earned both a master’s degree in mass communications and a B.A. from Texas Tech University. **Adam Cox** has been appointed to the position of CFO. Cox majored in English (with minors in business and computer science) at the University of Alabama before his career path carried him from Bank of America, where he served as an operations consultant with a focus in Six Sigma, to business process manager and controller at San Francisco Opera, a position that required him to manage all accounting functions and audits. **John Harpool**, formerly a finance specialist for Hewlett-Packard/Electronic Data Systems has been tapped for the role of budget manager. Harpool specialized in financial support, planning and analysis during his 21 years with Hewlett-Packard, with a strong emphasis on operations and management support. He majored in accounting at the University of Texas at Austin where he earned a bachelor’s of business administration, and earned his M.B.A. at the University of North Texas.

The Board of Directors of **Houston Grand Opera** (HGO) has realigned the company’s top management structure, naming **Patrick Summers** as artistic and music director, occupying the Margaret Alkek Williams Chair. Chief Operating Officer **Perry Leech** has been named managing director. Chief Advancement Officer **Greg Robertson** completes the executive leadership team, which is supported by an eight-member senior management staff. These moves follow the departure of Anthony Freud, the company’s general director, who has been appointed to lead Lyric Opera of Chicago. In his 13 years with HGO, Summers has conducted more than 45 operas across the full range of the repertoire and is responsible for many of the company’s artistic advances, including the formation and development of the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra. At HGO, Leech has taken on increasing responsibilities culminating in his promotion to COO in 2010, a role in which he has overseen all aspects of the company’s technical, financial, artistic and administrative operations.

**OPERA America’s Laura Day Giarolo** has been promoted to director of learning and community engagement. Her new role synthesizes her responsibilities in arts education and professional development activities, such as OPERA America’s webinars and conference programming. Previously, Day Giarolo served as director of community engagement with the Metropolitan Opera Guild, where she gained significant experience in developing and leading professional

development seminars for both experienced arts administrators and emerging leaders in the field. As an arts educator, she created a highly successful series of innovative programs and frequently presented lectures for Met audiences. A *cum laude* graduate of Williams College with dual degrees in music and American studies, Day Giarolo received her M.B.A. in management systems from Fordham University. **Lyndsay Werking** has been promoted to artistic services manager. Her responsibilities have been expanded to fully address the needs of artistic administrators and technical/production personnel of member companies. She oversees grant administration, forum meetings, visa letter support and the North American Works Directory. Before coming to OPERA America, she had served as the dramaturgy and projected titles intern at Glimmerglass Opera and as a dramaturgy intern with the Physical Virus Collective, Tanz Freiburg Heidelberg at Theater Freiburg in Germany. Werking graduated from Colgate University with a B.A. in music and theater. Additionally, she studied German, music and theater at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg.

**Cecelia Schieve** has been named to the new position of general director at **Opera on the James** (Lynchburg, VA). Schieve joined the company in January 2010 as executive director. Prior to joining Opera on the James, Schieve was director of young artist and education programs at Florida Grand Opera from 2006-2008. She was assistant general director of Anchorage Opera from 2003-2006, after a career in academics

including as director of opera at Boston Conservatory from 1990-2003.

**Palm Beach Opera** has renewed the contract of artistic director & principal conductor **Bruno Aprea** through the 2013-2014 season. Maestro Aprea has been with Palm Beach Opera in this position since the beginning of the 2005-2006 season and has conducted more than 20 productions with the company. Aprea began his musical career as a pianist after studying under his father, Tito Aprea, at the Conservatoire of S.Cecilia in Rome. He met with success at a young age, paving the way to a career on the international concert circuit. Aprea is dedicated to symphonic and opera music in equal measure. His operatic repertoire includes most of the major operas of Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, Puccini and Mascagni, and the major works of Mozart, Gluck and the French school. He has also recorded a number of rare operas for labels including Nuova Era, Bongiovanni and Kicco such as Mercadante's *Il bravo*, Lauro Rossi's *Il domino Nero*, Rossini's *La pietra del paragone*, Puccini's *Le villi*, Mascagni's *Le maschere*; recently *Zanetto* has been released on DVD.

**Washington National Opera** (WNO) has appointed **Francesca Zambello** as the company's artistic advisor. Simultaneously, Chief Operating Officer **Michael L. Mael** has been named executive director. With these appointments, WNO enters into its affiliation with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (effective July 1) with a complete roster of artistic and administrative executives. As artistic advisor, Zambello will offer advice and expertise related to opera repertoire, casting and creative teams. Zambello made her company debut with *Of Mice and Men* in 2001, and has returned to direct *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Billy Budd*, *Fidelio* and, most recently, *Salome*. She began her career as the artistic director of Skylight Opera Theatre and as an assistant director to the late Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. An American who grew up in Europe, she speaks French, Italian, German and Russian. She is a graduate of Colgate University in Hamilton, NY. As executive director, Mael will manage all WNO activities, working closely with WNO staff and board, as well as with Kennedy Center leadership, to meet the organization's artistic and financial goals. Mael joined WNO in April 2008 and was appointed executive director in May 2011. Formerly COO, he was responsible for all

financial and day-to-day operations of the company, and under his leadership, the organization returned to financial stability with four consecutive balanced budgets. He led the effort to affiliate with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, ensuring the long-term stability of WNO. Mael received his A.B. from Brown University and his M.B.A. from Stanford University.


**Candace Simon** has joined the leadership staff at **American Lyric Theater** as manager of institutional advancement. Her responsibilities include strategic planning, execution and management of fundraising initiatives, and overseeing foundation, corporate and community relationships. Most recently, Simon was the general manager at Bricolage Production Company in Pittsburgh, where she was responsible for development and marketing initiatives, as well as implementation of the organization's strategic plan. While at Bricolage, she was also responsible for producing the Pittsburgh premiere of Stephen Karam's *Speech and Debate*. Simon has also held positions with The Public Theater and Roundabout Theatre Company, and received her master's degree in arts management from Carnegie Mellon University. ☺

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**SAVE THE DATE!**

*OPERA Conference 2012* will be held in Philadelphia June 13-16 and headquartered at the Doubletree Center City with rooms available for \$166 per night. Look for a formal announcement of the conference theme and registration information in the Winter issue of *Opera America* magazine or visit [www.operaamerica.org/content/conference](http://www.operaamerica.org/content/conference). 



# Arts and the Charitable Deduction

By Brandon Gryde

According to OPERA America's Year in Review, private contributions made up approximately \$502 million or 52 percent of total revenue for the sector in FY2008 — more than the total revenue from ticket sales and government support combined.

For arts and culture organizations, much support comes from donors with high incomes. Currently, individuals making more than \$200,000 per year are permitted to take a charitable deduction for donations totaling up to 35 percent of their income. (Giving over this level has no positive tax benefits.) These charitable contributions often support bold artistic plans, increased accessibility and valuable community partnerships that support education and healthy communities.

Tax benefits for the wealthy have received growing scrutiny lately. (How many of your Facebook friends reposted Warren Buffet's *New York Times* August op-ed piece asking Congress to stop coddling the rich?) A 12-member Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, or "Super Committee," has been formed and charged with recommending an additional \$1.5 trillion in savings by the end of 2011. Tax incentives, including the charitable deduction, will most likely be debated.

As part of this debate, the Super Committee will likely reference a number of recent recommendations and reports:

- For the third year in a row, President Obama proposed capping the charitable deduction at 28 percent for individuals making more than \$200,000 per year.
- The Simpson-Bowles National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform published a report in December 2011 that proposed replacing the deduction with a 12 percent tax credit (a deduction reduces the amount of taxable income based on one's tax bracket; a tax credit lowers an individual's tax bill dollar for dollar, regardless of income).
- Last April's Congressional Budget Office report details a variety of options for charitable giving incentives and their ramifications, including extending incentives to non-itemizers (those who currently take the standard deduction and tend to be lower income earners) and offering incentives based on a minimum donation (such as a \$500 minimum donation or a percentage of one's income), exploring what these two options look like in both deduction and credit scenarios.

Independent Sector cites a Network for Good study stating that tax policy influences how much, and when, people give. Arts and culture organizations, relying most heavily on the donations of high income earners, must convey the public value of the arts now more than ever, as many foundations and government agencies reduce spending in the arts.

It is important for the arts community to reach out to elected officials and express the important role individual donations have in supporting a vibrant and healthy arts sector. For additional information about the charitable deduction and talking points, visit OPERA America's Issue Center at [www.operaamerica.org](http://www.operaamerica.org). ☺

# The Golden Years Take Center Stage

**New attitudes toward seniors spur creative arts education programs, and even innovations in art.**

**By Amanda Keil**

To offset today's aging audiences, performing arts companies of all sorts invest their resources in luring younger listeners. But in the same 2008 National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) survey confirming that the age of attendees is rising, a less-heralded fact tells another tale: arts participation in the 45-54 age range, once a reliable base, showed even steeper decline than among young adults.

Perhaps part of the reason for this decline is the relative lack of programming targeted specifically toward older adults. A casual review of the websites of opera companies reveals a significantly greater number of programs and services designed for young subscribers. Other fields are similar: a 2005 survey by the Theatre Communications Group found that among 107 theaters, roughly 80 percent of the education programs were geared toward youth under the age of 18. A survey in the same year by the League of American Orchestras revealed that among 121 orchestras,

almost 75 percent of education programs were designed for young people.

National demographics show that based on sheer numbers alone, the tastes and wants of older adults will be a growing force in markets across the board. According to the U.S. Census, in 2009 adults aged 65 or older represented nearly 13 percent of the population, or about one in every eight Americans. In the next 20 years, that number is expected to grow to 19 percent, or nearly one in five. In addition, performing arts audiences are aging even faster than the general public, according to the NEA survey. But a graying marketplace presents an opportunity for companies to re-imagine how they can best serve their constituent audiences. With advances in medicine rejuvenating the physical capabilities of older adults and changing social attitudes toward aging, more and more arts organizations are finding creative ways to engage this growing demographic.

Research has shown that frequent involvement with arts-related activities offers unsurpassed benefits to seniors. In 2001, the NEA partnered with noted geriatric psychiatrist Dr. Gene Cohen to conduct a multi-year study on the impact of creative aging arts programs. The study found that adults who regularly took part in activities run by professional artists (such as painting, oral history, poetry writing, music lessons) experienced better health, fewer doctor visits and increased involvement in other community-based activities.

The study cited additional research that demonstrates positive effects on health when older persons socialize with others in meaningful ways or take part in an activity that provides them a sense of control or "mastery in what they are doing." Participatory arts programs "foster sustained involvement because of their beauty and productivity," Dr. Cohen writes, while "many general activities and



physical exercises do not have this high engaging, thereby sustaining, quality.”

“We’re living in an unprecedented time,” says Gay Hanna, the executive director of the National Center for Creative Aging. Demand for quality programming among seniors and senior service organizations “really took off when people realized that they had more than 30 extra years than their forebears,” she says. Hanna describes many retirees who resume music lessons they had left off as young students. She also notes that today’s retirees have higher levels of education and revenue than in previous generations, a combination that allows them to pursue interests they find challenging and enriching.

A growing market looking to the creative field for meaningful experiences in the arts has the potential to change arts education

and community outreach efforts, audience development, fundraising and even ways of creating art. Some organizations are embracing these new opportunities.

For choreographer Liz Lerman, programming with seniors “was foremost motivated by her own artistic needs,” says John Borstel, humanities director at Dance Exchange, the company she founded in 1975. After Lerman’s mother died of cancer in 1978, she wanted to tell her story through dance and knew that elderly dancers would more closely express the experience than young dancers. That impulse led to more than 30 years of multi-generational choreography that reflects the company’s belief that dance is for everyone.

By incorporating seniors, community members and non-dancers in their work, Dance Exchange has assumed

a different profile than typical dance companies. “When we come into a retirement home and residents see a multi-generational company, there’s a connection between art and what would look like outreach,” says Borstel. “The more people can be brought into the artistic process, the more they can see the relevance of a Mozart opera to contemporary life,” he says. During many Dance Exchange outreach presentations, for example, performers create a new dance based on stories from audience members.

Today’s choreographers have shown us that a wide range of movements — not all requiring physical virtuosity — can be considered dance. Traditionally, opera has been associated not only with highly trained professionals but with a spectacular army of artisans and technicians, making it challenging to imagine amateur participation. Redefining opera as “sung story,”



The Liz Lerman Dance Exchange performance of *The Matter of Origins*. Photo by Jaclyn Borowski/The Diamondback.





Acushla Bastible, artistic co-director of *Lifesongs* congratulates collaborator Francisco Romero, a member of the Bits and Pieces songwriting group at Santa Fe Care Center where they performed the song *The Long Journey*. Photo by Bob Godwin.

however, can open new opportunities for professionals and amateurs.

Now finishing its fourth full year, The Santa Fe Opera's *Lifesongs* puts the lives and stories of the community's seniors on center stage. The project first started after a 10-month community dialogue in preparation for the company's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Andrea Fellows Walters, the company's director of education and community programs, collaborated with composer Molly Sturges to work individually with residents of assisted living facilities to help them write songs that express their feelings and memories at the end of their lives. Sturges offered musical ideas at the piano, and an adaptive electronic instrument allowed seniors to shape sounds and phrases with their hands. The resulting songs were performed by a choir that included students from the University of New

Mexico, professionals and community members, and high school students from The Santa Fe Opera's pre-apprentice program.

By letting seniors create and take ownership of their work and be recognized for their contributions, *Lifesongs* allows for the type of reminiscence and processing that is key to healthy aging. Yet "*Lifesongs* is not art therapy," says Fellows Walters, "but real art." In addition, this kind of project "shows a huge level of commitment to the community that the opera company is in," says Sturges, bringing "many different kinds of people into the realm of opera." The most recent concert attracted more than 700 listeners.

In her work at Houston Grand Opera and now at Seattle Opera, Sue Elliott has led community outreach efforts

that are the "among the standard bearers in the field," as Fellows Walters says.

At Houston Grand Opera, Elliott oversaw the creation of the *Song of Houston*, an annual initiative that commissions new works from contemporary composers based on stories from Houston's past and present. Since 2007, the program has brought together a wide range of community organizations to express in music the stories of Houston's diverse communities. Seattle Opera is undertaking a similar project that Elliott expects to have special resonance with seniors. In partnership with three local cultural institutions, Seattle Opera is inviting the public to share stories and pictures, and to upload video clips about people's most meaningful possessions.

*Belonging(s): A Gathering of Stories* will culminate in several community-based performances of a newly commissioned opera.

This kind of programming is not solely tied to audience development, however. The goal of the *Song of Houston* was not to convert people to subscribers “but to explore all possibilities for our art form, engage people who had never considered opera and be a public service,” says Elliott. Andrea Fellows Walters agrees. “Not all programming can relate to the mainstage,” she says. “My job is to increase awareness in the community of our values.”

Elliott also works closely with Seattle Opera’s development office, identifying major gift and planned giving candidates. “Everything we do is part of a fundraising effort,” she says. Educational events — Elliott estimates that 75-80 percent of public presentations reach older adults — often include representatives from the development staff, and “a great many of the programs offered as donor benefits are educational in nature,” she says.

The relatively new fields of creative aging and lifelong learning have produced numerous resources and research on best practices. Americans for the Arts and the National Center for Creative Aging published a 2008 monograph entitled *Creativity Matters: Arts and Aging in America*, which reviews the research behind creative arts programs for seniors and offers guidelines for program development. The monograph supplements an online toolkit that offers detailed advice on program design, implementation and evaluation. Partners for Livable Communities recently published a report entitled *Culture Connects us All*, which encourages arts organizations to reach out to seniors and another growing population, immigrants. It highlights efforts in six cities, and

includes a list of best practices and recommendations. Lifetime Arts, in White Plains, NY, provides training and resources to teaching artists interested in working with seniors.

Spurred on by changing demographics, grantmakers have developed programs to support creative aging work and outreach to older audiences. The Wallace Foundation Excellence Award initiative, which is concluding in 2012, strengthens audience participation efforts in six cities with funds for research, technical assistance and data collection. Two of the recipients are Opera Company of Philadelphia, which is reaching out to adults ages 45-55, and Minnesota Opera, which is targeting women ages 35-60. These concerted outreach efforts reflect the findings of a 2001 RAND study commissioned by Wallace, revealing that organizations can successfully develop new audiences when their efforts align with their mission and goals, their initiatives are targeted to specific audiences instead of the general public, and they understand and address the barriers audiences face to participation, whether practical (scheduling, ticket prices) or perceptual (opera is only for rich people).

The Wallace Foundation will soon publish case studies on four of its Excellence Award recipients, and ArtsJournal.com will host a week-long interactive blog in early October that will highlight their audience participation practices and strategies. Through a regranteeing program, the MetLife Foundation offers funding to community music schools to design and develop professionally led arts education programs for adults over age 60. Recipients provide ongoing programs of at least 90 minutes of participatory activities each week over a 12-week course, with mechanisms in place for evaluation and sustainability.

MetLife compiled a study of its 2008 pilot grants in creative aging,

summarizing the characteristics of a strong program. Among the elements required for success, the grantees stressed a willingness to listen to participants, employment of professional teaching artists who truly enjoy older adults, an appreciation for the value of social engagement for seniors, a structured but flexible curriculum, an intergenerational component, an assessment process and planning for sustainability from the beginning of the program.

While this type of creative aging program may appear to be beyond the scope of most opera houses, Rohit Burman, director of the culture and public broadcasting program of the MetLife Foundation, emphasizes the power of partnerships, such as with local government departments of aging or senior centers. The sustained engagement of well-planned programming for seniors can pay off in the long run, both for participants and for institutions. “There is tremendous interest among elders to keep learning and to give back to the organizations they care about,” Burman says. Gay Hanna encourages performing arts organizations to offer more daytime programming, which is when there is a lack of interesting opportunities for seniors.

Any efforts to reach a broader audience — whether diverse ages or minorities — allows an organization to examine the ways it engages with the entire community. The Partners for Livable Communities report emphasizes the importance of building “mutually beneficial relationships” with the populations they wish to reach. “For arts and cultural organizations, this means working both inside their four walls and outside.” The report describes the unique assets that immigrants and older adults have to offer, including social networks, schedules that allow for volunteerism, and strong family and youth connections. “By engaging with these

populations in meaningful ways," the report argues, "cultural organizations can increase their attendance, revenues and donor relations while simultaneously providing valuable services and expanding the reach of their arts missions."

Moreover, as older people continue to comprise a larger portion of classical music audiences, their importance as consumers and supporters of culture will become even stronger. And given enough opportunity, they

might even become a growth market. For institutions considering targeted programming for seniors, Burman says, "you've got to get onto that train right now because it's already left the station." 🎭



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# A Conversation with Mark Slavkin

*Mark Slavkin is the vice president for education at the Music Center: Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles County. He leads a team of 20 professional staff and over 150 performing and teaching artists working to strengthen arts education in Los Angeles County. He serves on the Executive Committee for "Arts for All: the Los Angeles County Regional Blueprint for Arts Education." He chairs the board of the California Alliance for Arts Education. The Music Center is home to the Los Angeles Opera and is a major dance presenter through Glorja Kaufman Presents Dance at the Music Center. In this interview with OPERA America's Brandon Gryde, he discusses, in practical terms, his work as an arts education advocate.*

**At the heart of the LA Music Center's education mission is the goal of "[making] arts education part of the core curriculum for all schools in Los Angeles County." How do you work with school administrators and lawmakers to make this goal a reality?**

We are fortunate to be in a community where most school administrators and elected officials value arts education. The challenge is to help them understand the elements of quality and to define specific, concrete actions they can take to be supportive. Too often, arts education is perceived as only the final show or performance. In this way, it can be marginalized and seen as an "enrichment" activity for the "talented few." Our challenge is to share effective classroom practice that shows the value of the arts in the context of the overall instructional goals of a school. I find taking a principal or superintendent on a "classroom walkthrough" is much more powerful than sitting in an office talking in the abstract about the importance of arts education. For elected leaders, we must appreciate that our issues are among hundreds they may consider each day. We need to be very concrete and specific about what we want to ask by way of support. While adequate funding is always a major concern, we also

need to educate policy-makers about how specific policy decisions affect arts learning. For example, with the California Alliance for Arts Education we are working with state legislators to help them understand how a particular bill intended to strengthen career and technical education could be dangerous to the status of arts education.

**How important is the big picture of arts education to school administrators? Does decision-making occur on a case-by-case basis?**

Thanks to organizations like the Arts Education Partnership, Americans for the Arts and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, our field has many good tools to communicate the big picture. In my experience, the most effective advocacy occurs when principals and school district leaders get to see effective classroom practice in action. Research and rhetoric have their place in our toolkit of advocacy resources. Yet neither has the same clout as showing people quality programs in the classroom.

**Los Angeles has received significant funding and accolades for its Arts for All program (of which the Music Center is a partner), a county-wide**

**collaboration working to create vibrant classrooms, schools, communities and economies through the restoration of all arts disciplines into the core curriculum for 1.6 million public K-12 students. Tell us about this program and what you've learned about how to make inroads into a school district.**

We've certainly learned a lot through our work with Arts for All. Here are just a few highlights. First, we view school districts as the unit of change, not just individual schools or classrooms. This keeps the focus on equitable access for *all* students and reminds us that district policy and funding support are essential. Second, "top-down" district support and "bottom-up" classroom support need to happen at the same time. Neither is sufficient in isolation. And third, there is enormous power and possibility through collaborations. None of the individual organizations involved in Arts for All (e.g., the County Arts Commission, County Office of Education, the Music Center, etc.) could have achieved our broad regional success by working alone or in isolation. It has been the power of the team approach that has made the biggest difference. We are proud to have a great new website to share this work at [www.lacountyartsforall.org](http://www.lacountyartsforall.org).

**How does your approach change when you're working with a top-down program like Arts for All compared to the Music Center's own educational programs?**

I don't think our strategy or approach changes. We have realized that all the layers or levels need to be supported in concert — classroom tools and supports for teachers, leadership training and support for principals, and leadership training and support for school district leaders. While funding is always important, the buy-in and leadership of the key players is even more important. The problem is that just as a certain leader really "gets it," they can move on to a different school or district. We are constantly starting at square one and working to cultivate and engage new teachers, principals and superintendents.

**Before approaching a school, what are the most important things a cultural organization should know about the school and about its own strengths and weaknesses?**

Over the years, we at the LA Music Center have created more flexibility

or customization in our school partnerships. We want to be seen as a true partner, and not just a vendor. So rather than present a set package, we like to spend time listening to a potential school partner. We want to hear about their priorities and their challenges. We want to hear in their own words why they are considering a new focus on arts education. We also want to gauge whether they seem to have the commitment and capacity to manage a partnership with us. Because we are focused on supporting teachers, we want to get a sense of their interest and commitment. Is this something teachers are excited about or is this seen as a burden they need to manage? I think all cultural organizations would be wise to define their goals or expectations for the ideal school partner. Sometimes in the rush to sign up more schools, we overlook whether this it really a good fit for both sides.

**How does the LA Music Center reconcile the dual challenge of identifying schools that are a good fit for partnerships while also working towards the goal of making arts education part of the**

**core curriculum for all schools in Los Angeles County?**

We work on both levels — the programmatic level and the policy/advocacy level. Although we are a large organizations, our programmatic resources are always finite. The size of our staff, the number of teaching and performing artists, and the hours in a day are limited. So we try to "work with the willing" and develop school partnerships where we feel we can make a meaningful difference. Meanwhile, through our involvements with Arts for All and the California Alliance for Arts Education, we are working to secure supportive policies and improved funding that will benefit all schools. In the end, we see our programs as a catalyst or a spark to help a school or district advance. Our big goal is not for us to work with every school. Rather, we want to see that our efforts contributed to the development of policies and funding that sustain quality arts education for all kids.

**Your website has an article that defines two types of**

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**principal leadership in schools — operational (providing resources, staff and facilities) and transformational (sees arts as central to overall teaching and learning). What has been your experience with transformational leadership? Do school administrators become successful arts advocates among their peers?**

Whether we are talking about the arts or any other aspect of learning, great schools need great principals. In most of our partners, we are seeking a basic level of commitment

and engagement from the principal. Usually, this is about just achieving the basic nuts and bolts of a project. When the principal is “on board,” we have an easier time securing needed facilities and time to bring the project to life. It is hard to work around a principal who is resistant or simply inaccessible. This is what I mean by operational leadership. But in our most effective partnerships, the principals are true champions for arts education. They are excited, passionate, curious and anxious to continue the progress and deepen

the work. Some principals have this belief system before we ever meet them. Others have an “aha moment” in the middle of our project that takes them to a new understanding. These transformational leaders are able to see how the arts fit in their larger vision for students and are able to drive sustained change in their schools. While we can’t control whether a principal “gets it,” I would say it is essential to continue to invest time in supporting and cultivating the involvement of principals. ☺

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# The National Opera Center



## A Center for Learning

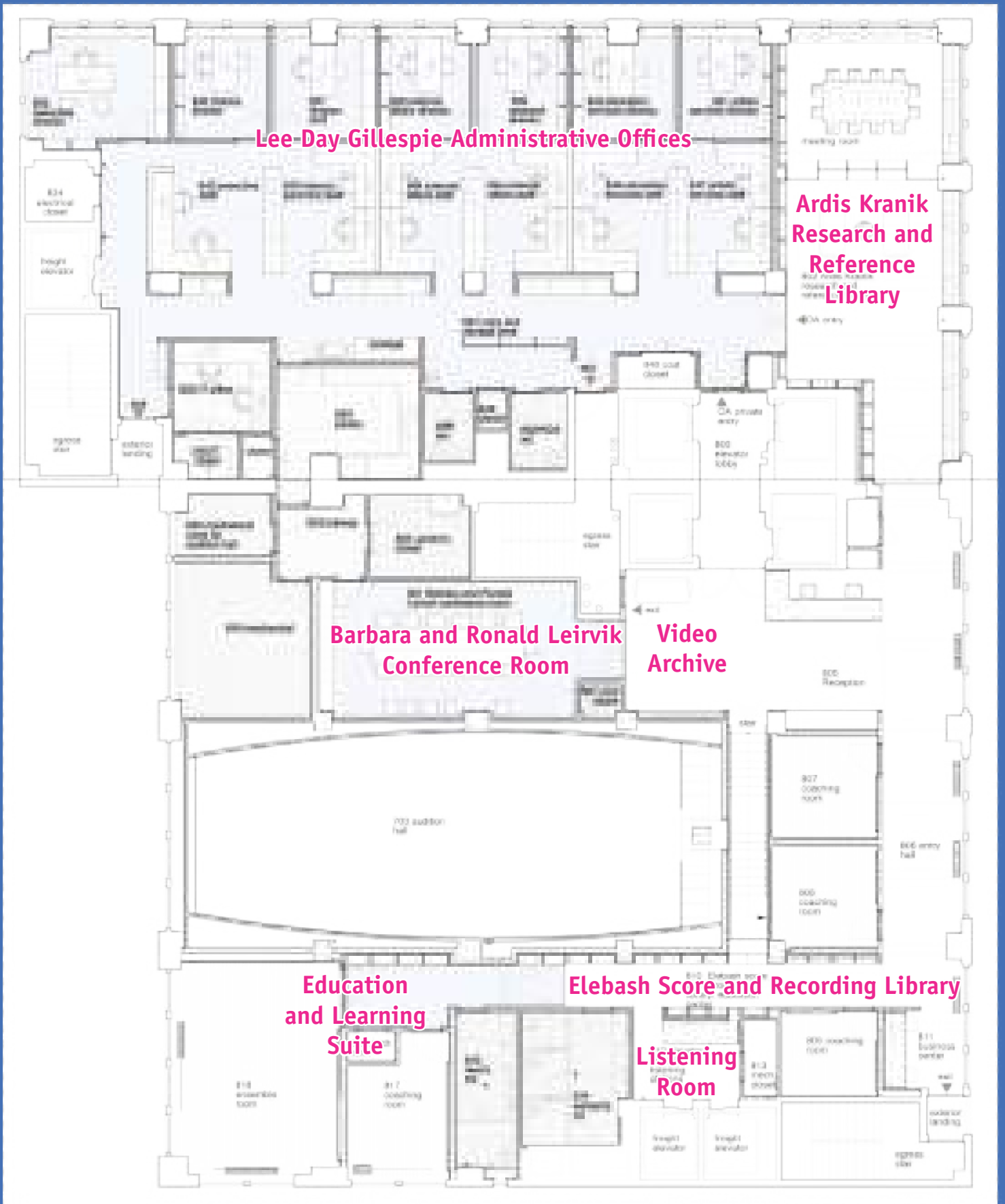
OPERA America is committed to developing and integrating education, audience development and community services that increase all forms of opera appreciation and deepen the relevance of opera and opera companies to communities throughout North America. The National Opera Center will strengthen this commitment by providing a variety of resources that will enhance and expand the service that OPERA America provides to the field.

In addition to physical facilities and reference collections, the technology of the National Opera Center will ensure that these resources are not only available in New York, but can be shared with colleagues around the country and indeed the world. The Audition/Recital Hall will be equipped with HD streaming capacities so workshops of new works can be viewed live in San Francisco or Anchorage. The Barbara and Ronald Leirvik Board Room will have teleconferencing equipment so that design teams in Europe can join with

colleagues across America to discuss new productions. The Media Suite will have recording capabilities so that aspiring artists can produce affordable sample recordings necessary for entry into competitions and young artist training programs.

One of the key features of the Opera Center will be the Education and Learning Suite. This suite, consisting of the facility's largest ensemble room, a smaller studio and dedicated library, will be equipped with a widescreen LCD TV with DVD Blu-Ray playback and a SMARTboard with projection and whiteboard capabilities. These interactive, multimedia components will enhance presentations, lectures, teacher workshops, professional development seminars and education programs for groups of children and adult learners.

Adjacent to the Education and Learning Suite will be the Elebash Score and Recording Library and Listening Room. The Score and Recording Library will house OPERA America's





growing collection of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century North American opera scores and recordings. Supplemented by scores and recordings of the standard repertoire, this library will be a resource for repertoire research and role preparation — even for last-minute auditions of unexpected music. The Listening Room will be equipped with headphones and video monitors, and will provide space for individualized study.

The Ardis Krainik Research and Reference Library will contain general reference resources from OPERA America's growing collection combined with a private collection contributed to OPERA America, including books on opera, composers and librettists, production design, architecture and design, cultural history and other related topics.

In addition, the National Opera Center will house the combined resources of the former Central Opera Service of the Metropolitan Opera National Council, the records of the former National Opera Institute and OPERA America's extensive files. The OPERA America/National Opera Institute/Central Opera Service Archive documents the production and performance of opera in the United States over the last six decades.

OPERA America's Video Archive will house a growing collection of video tributes and interviews, including those associated with the NEA Opera Honors program, with which OPERA America has been closely associated since the program's inception. Documentaries about the honorees and related supporting interviews will form the foundation for the most important oral history of American opera in existence. The Video Archive will also be the home of historic opera performances and will be available to singers and other artists, teachers and opera company staff to aid in role preparation and research. An interactive database of the archive will enable visitors to search by artist, opera and aria.

Members of OPERA America's administrative staff serve as educators for the whole field. Through informal meetings and focused consultations, staff members provide information that allows opera professionals to do their jobs more efficiently. With OPERA America's administrative offices as part of the Opera Center, members will find it increasingly convenient to make use of all of OPERA America's resources — including its human ones.

The potential impact of a space designed specifically for the opera industry is unlimited. In addition to the physical facility, the combined resources of the Elebash Score and Recording Library, the Ardis Krainik Research and Reference Library, the OPERA America Archive and the Video Archive will make the National Opera Center an even more invaluable resource to the field, accessible to visitors to New York City and — assisted by technology — opera stakeholders around the world. 🌐

## Opera Center Founders

OPERA America is deeply grateful to a partnership of public and private donors who have provided the leadership support to help ensure the success of the effort to create the National Opera Center.

Individual commitments of \$100,000 or more, payable over five years, together with a \$2 million challenge grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and a grant from the City of New York, have recognized the unique contribution the National Opera Center can make to realizing the full creative potential of American artists and our nation's opera companies.

OPERA America looks forward to expressing appreciation to the National Opera Center's leadership donors on a wall in the National Opera Center Lobby and named spaces within the Center.

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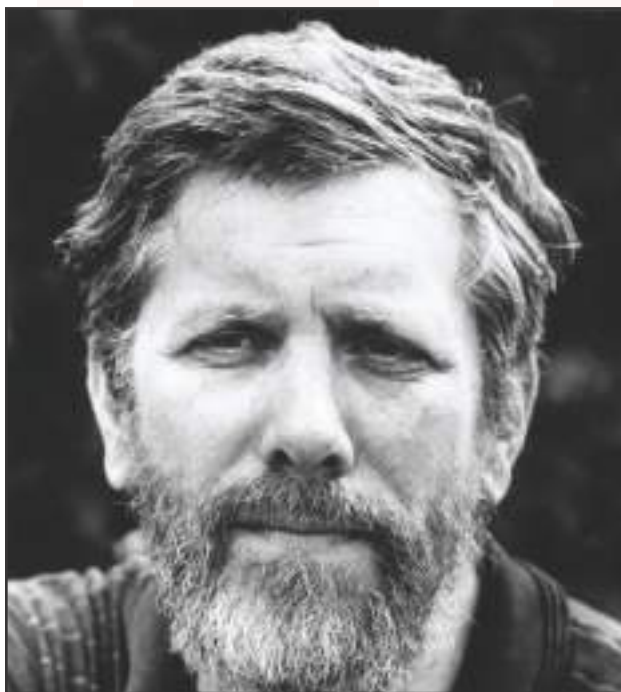
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For information about the Founders program, the Mellon Foundation challenge grant and naming opportunities within the Center, please contact OPERA America President and CEO, Marc A. Scorca, at 212-796-8620, ext. 211, or by e-mail at [MScorca@operaamerica.org](mailto:MScorca@operaamerica.org).

# 2011 National Opera Honors

John Conklin, Speight Jenkins, Risë Stevens and Robert Ward have been recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts for their contributions to the field of opera. Now in its fourth year, the NEA Opera Honors is the highest award our nation bestows in opera.



John Conklin. Photo courtesy of Boston Lyric Opera.

## JOHN CONKLIN

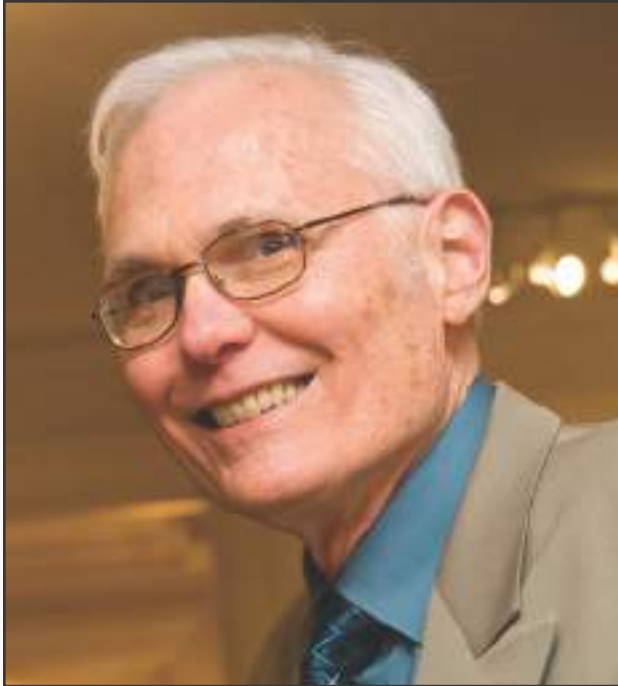
Born in Hartford, CT, on June 22, 1937, **John Conklin** is admired around the world for his career as a highly acclaimed stage designer. His style is conceptual rather than literal, and through its open approach to design possibilities has had an enormous influence. He is one of the principal figures in American stage design, both for opera and for theater, and his set and costume designs are seen in opera houses, theaters and ballet companies across the world. He has trained subsequent generations of designers through his teaching at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and his mentorship of emerging theater professionals at Glimmerglass Opera and elsewhere. He was the first artist to be nominated to the OPERA America board of directors.

In the U.S., Conklin has designed for the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Kennedy Center, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Glimmerglass Opera, Seattle Opera, The Santa Fe Opera, The Dallas Opera, San Diego Opera and Washington National Opera, among others. In Europe, he has designed for the English National Opera, London; Royal Opera, Stockholm; Bastille Opera, Paris; and the opera companies of Munich, Amsterdam and Bologna. He also has designed sets on and off-Broadway, as well as for regional theaters, including the American

Repertory Theater, the Goodman Theatre, the Long Wharf Theatre, Hartford Stage, Arena Stage, the Guthrie Theater, Center Stage in Baltimore and Actors Theatre of Louisville.

Conklin's credits include two *Ring* Cycles, in San Francisco and Chicago, and many world premieres, including the 1988 world premiere of Argento's *The Aspern Papers* with The Dallas Opera and the world premiere of *The Ghosts of Versailles* at the Metropolitan Opera (1991). For Glimmerglass Opera, where he served as associate artistic director for 18 years, he designed sets for Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* and Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, and costumes for Richard Rodney Bennett's *Mines of Sulfur*, among others.

Conklin has designed extensively on Broadway, receiving a Tony Award nomination (1974) for set design of *The Au Pair Man*. He received the Robert L.B. Tobin Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatrical Design from the Theatre Development Fund (2008). He earned his B.A. and his M.F.A from Yale University. Conklin is the artistic advisor for Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) where his recent work has included *Lucie de Lammermoor* (2005) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2011). At BLO he also works to develop new supplemental performances, lecture series and community events.



Speight Jenkins. Photo by Rozarii Lynch.

## SPEIGHT JENKINS

Born in Dallas on January 31, 1937, **Speight Jenkins** is recognized nationally as a leading authority on opera and one of the most influential and accomplished general directors in the United States.

He was educated at the University of Texas (B.A., 1957) and Columbia University (Law, 1961). After working as an editor for *Opera News* (1967-1973) and as music critic for the *New York Post* (1973-1981), from 1981 to 1983 he was host for the *Live from the Met* broadcasts on public television. He has written reviews and articles for a number of publications. He was appointed general director of the Seattle Opera in 1983 and, with a new production of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* (presented in 1986, 1987, 1991 and 1995) and ventures such as Prokofiev's *War and Peace* and Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* in 1990, he injected new life into the company's artistic standing and financial fortunes. In 2001, Jenkins offered the company's third complete production of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, directed by Stephen Wadsworth and designed by Thomas Lynch, which was revived in 2005 and 2009.

Jenkins' knowledge of opera is reflected in Seattle Opera's many innovative productions, substantial publications and comprehensive education programs and services. He has

strengthened and extended Seattle Opera's reputation as a "Wagner center" by producing all 10 of Wagner's major operas — including two very different *Ring* productions. In 2006, Jenkins held Seattle Opera's first International Wagner Competition, developed to discover and promote outstanding young singers who show promise of major careers in Wagner operas. Because of his passion for the arts and energetic leadership style, the *Seattle Times* named Jenkins one of the 150 most influential people who have shaped the character of Seattle and King County, ArtsFund presented him with its Outstanding Achievement in the Arts award, and *Opera News* cited Jenkins as one of the 25 "most powerful" names in opera in America.

In 2008-2009, Jenkins celebrated his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary season at Seattle Opera. In honor of his "immeasurable contributions to the city's cultural arts and civic life," Mayor Nickels proclaimed April 25, 2009, as Speight Jenkins Day in Seattle; he received a Mayor's Arts Award in September 2009. For more than three decades, Jenkins has been an annual guest on the Metropolitan Opera Quiz. His opera previews of every Seattle Opera production are broadcast on 98.1 Classical KING FM, and his CD lectures on Wagner's *Ring* have become a mainstay in opera libraries.

He served four years in the United States Army as a member of the Judge Advocate General's Corps. He has received an honorary Doctorate of Humanities from Seattle University, an honorary Doctorate of Music from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA, and an honorary Doctorate from the New England Conservatory. He also served on the National Council on the Arts from 1996-2000. Jenkins is married and has two children and three granddaughters.

Past recipients of the NEA Opera Honors include John Adams, Martina Arroyo, Frank Corsaro, David DiChiera, Carlisle Floyd, Richard Gaddes, Philip Glass, Marilyn Horne, James Levine, Lotfi Mansouri, Leontyne Price, Eve Queler and Julius Rudel.





Risë Stevens. Photo by David W. Martin.

## RISË STEVENS

Born Risë Steenberg in the Bronx on June 11, 1913, and raised in Queens, mezzo-soprano **Risë Stevens** is known and respected worldwide for her vibrant career in opera. A pupil of Anna Schoen-René at the Juilliard School, Stevens turned down a contract offer from the Metropolitan Opera in the mid-1930s to develop her artistry in Europe, mostly at the opera in Prague.

She returned to the United States in 1938, making her debut with the Metropolitan Opera on tour in Philadelphia as Octavian in Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. Later that same year, she made her New York Metropolitan Opera debut in the title role of Ambroise Thomas' *Mignon*. She virtually owned many of the great mezzo roles such as Gluck's Orpheus (*Orfeo ed Euridice*) and Saint-Saëns's Dalila (*Samson et Dalila*); she boasted a repertory that also included Mozart's Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Ponchielli's Laura (*La Gioconda*) and Johann Strauss' Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*). Her portrayal of Bizet's Carmen was a role she performed 124 times at the Met — one in which she was described as voluptuous, earthy and white-hot in her alternating moods of passion and anger.

Millions more fell in love with Stevens through her frequent radio appearances and through the films *The Chocolate Soldier*

(1941) with Nelson Eddy and *Going My Way* (1944) with Bing Crosby. She appeared often on such early television programs as *The Voice of Firestone* and *The Ed Sullivan Show*, where she sang both operatic and popular songs. She also appeared on one of the first Met telecasts singing *Carmen* (1952) opposite leading American tenor Richard Tucker as Don José.

She often is credited not only for saving the day at more than one performance of the Metropolitan Opera, but also for saving the company's 1961 season. After the company had canceled its entire 1961-1962 schedule due to stalled labor negotiations, a persuasive telegram from Stevens convinced President Kennedy to intervene, and he ordered the Secretary of Labor to arbitrate the dispute. Just three weeks later, the entire season was reinstated on schedule. President Kennedy and the nation had been devoted fans of the Met's reigning mezzo for nearly a quarter of a century.

Following 353 Met performances, in 1961 Stevens retired from her role as a Met performer. In 1964, she inaugurated the Music Theater of Lincoln Center as Anna in a revival of *The King and I*, produced by Richard Rodgers. She assumed several important roles in developing the future of opera in the United States. She was named co-director of the Met's newly created National Company (1964), which was dedicated to taking opera on tour to dozens of American cities where opera was not available and for two seasons provided many young singers their first chance to perform professionally on the opera stage. She also served as president of the Mannes College of Music (1975-1978) and rejoined the Met as advisor on the Young Artist Development Program and executive director of its National Council Auditions (1980-1988). For her numerous activities "in the discovery, training and championing of young American singers," Stevens was honored by the National Opera Institute (1982) and by the Kennedy Center (1990).

Honorees will be recognized in a ceremony on Thursday, October 27 at the Harman Center in Washington, D.C. Free tickets to the ceremony will be distributed to the general public in September. OPERA America is also planning a number of events in conjunction with the event; for more information, contact Cara Consilvio, [CConsilvio@operaamerica.org](mailto:CConsilvio@operaamerica.org).



Robert Ward. Photo by Robert Kolt.

## ROBERT WARD

Born in Cleveland on September 13, 1917, **Robert Ward** is respected and admired for his career as an American composer, conductor, administrator, educator and publishing executive.

In his youth, he studied theory, orchestration and piano, and began composing in high school. His early musical influences included Debussy, Ravel, Hindemith, Stravinsky and jazz. He studied composition with Howard Hanson and Bernard Rogers at the Eastman School of Music (1935-1939). His postgraduate study included composition with Frederick Jacobi and conducting with Albert Stoessel and Edgar Schenkman at the Juilliard School (1939-1941). Additional studies in composition occurred with Aaron Copland at the Tanglewood Music Festival (1940).

Ward served as a United States Army band director (1942-1946) during World War II, and it was while serving in the Pacific theater of operations that he met Mary Benedict, his wife of 62 years with whom he had five children. Upon his return to the United States in 1946, Ward earned his Artist Certificate from Juilliard and also gained a teaching position at that institution (1947-1956), and at Columbia University (1946-1958). During this time, Ward also served as the director of the Third Street Music Settlement (1952-1955).

He left Juilliard to become executive vice-president and managing editor of Galaxy Music Corporation and Highgate Press (1956-1967), posts he held until his appointment as chancellor of the North Carolina School of the Arts (1967-1974). In 1974, Ward stepped down as chancellor to become a professor. From 1979 until his retirement in 1989 he was on the music faculty at Duke University.

Even as a student, Ward had no difficulty securing performances for his compositions. By the time he and his Juilliard colleague Bernard Stambler wrote their first opera, he was already well known for his orchestral works. *Pantaloen* (1955, re-titled *He Who Gets Slapped*, 1959) was well received, leading to a commission from the New York City Opera for *The Crucible* (1961).

His compositions include eight operas, seven symphonies, three concerti, numerous shorter works for orchestra, music for wind ensemble, compositions for a variety of instrumental chamber groups, two cantatas, and various genres for vocal ensembles and songs for solo voice with accompaniment.

His compositional language in opera derives largely from Italian composers Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini. In his operas, Ward modifies this basic style to incorporate references to appropriate local color, such as the imitations of 17<sup>th</sup>-century hymnody that appear in *The Crucible*. His operas, as well as many shorter vocal works, reflect a concern for social and political issues of the times, as well as his interpretation of American idealism.

Ward was awarded three Guggenheim Fellowships (1950, 1954 and 1966), and for his opera *The Crucible* (1961), he won the Pulitzer Prize for Music (1962) and the New York Music Critics' Circle Citation Award (1962). 🍷

The NEA Opera Honors ceremony anticipates the opening of National Opera Week. From Friday, October 28 through Sunday, November 6, OPERA America, the National Endowment for the Arts and opera organizations across the United States invite you to participate in a variety of fun, free activities such as backstage tours, flash performances and YouTube contests.

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# The Artistic Exchange: Are You



Glimmerglass Opera's 1995 production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, designed by John Conklin. Photo by George Mott.

With the coming of projected supertitles, the somewhat ridiculous notion of having to do “homework” before attending a foreign language opera performance should have receded. In those far-off days before titles, what was one actually supposed to do? Study a detailed but inevitably too generalized synopsis of the action (insufficient) or memorize the libretto’s text by heart (impossible)? The theatrical experience is a moment-to-moment accumulation of words, visual images, sounds, music, narrative action and psychological development given from the stage and received by any given audience member in a detailed and complicated exchange.

But with the growth of opera company education departments (ostensibly a positive development) this notion of homework has, if anything, become more pervasive. I myself have put together a number of programs designed to somehow prepare people for a production. Is this a good thing?

*Personal anecdotal case study number one:* I attended a performance at English National Opera of Nicholas Hytner’s production of Handel’s *Xerxes*. I was familiar with Handel’s stage works in general but I didn’t know at that point any of the specifics of this one. I had read no reviews, I deliberately avoided looking at any of the publicity pictures, I didn’t read the synopsis in the program or even look at the cast of characters. I was thrown into the midst of a complicated plot whose character relationships I had to work out as they came up. Plot twists, betrayals, misunderstandings were surprising, unexpected, sometimes shocking. The opera was sung in English and, this being the era before titles, you were compelled to really listen to what they were saying... at the moment. The design and the staging were complicated, witty and allusive — unexpectedly combining Baroque elements with Assyrian motifs. In other words, there was a lot going on, but the result, rather than one of overwhelming confusion was one of the most compelling (and totally entertaining) evenings of opera I have ever experienced. Much of that engrossing delight and interest was, I think, generated by the unfolding of a surface narrative — a good story that I was receiving and understanding for the first time as it unfolded.

In the American opera world generally, a dearth in the repertory of new operas and the seemingly obsessive dependence on the “standard” repertory has led to loss of the sense of surprise, of a journey into unknown territory, of the excitement of discovery based on unexpected revelations of plot or character or idea. We have so often lost one of the basic attractions and pulls of theater — an attraction and pull that seems to live on the surface but which can draw one in deeper and deeper and lead one beneath that surface into whatever depths are appropriate and available. And this pull is the simple storytelling question — “what’s going to happen next?”

I understand how sharing a bit of the plot line might be useful in selling the opera in a brochure or advertisement, but I believe suspense, curiosity and good old-fashioned dramatic storytelling are time-honored ways of drawing an audience member in. You notice I say “audience member.” I am opposed to thinking of “the audience” as an abstract entity to be educated or performed AT. Each person is different, with a totally different and unique set of emotions, experiences that interact with the stimulus emitted by the stage and the pit to produce a totally unique event.

Confusion sets in when we think of a performance as an event that is prepared and delivered by a group of artists to a more or less passive public that more or less receives it. In the end, a theatrical event doesn’t actually happen on the stage; it happens in the mind and heart and guts of each individual audience member. A further confusion arises when we, the artists, want to be in control of the audience member’s reaction with devices like “Director’s Notes” — at least those which tell the audience what the production team is up to: what they meant, what the production as a whole means.

# Prepared?

By John Conklin

In the end, is what the artist meant important? The production result (not the process or even the intent) is what matters. Good artists work on many levels within themselves and often (thank God) produce work that they may not completely understand. Accepted ambiguity can provide meaning, stimulation, involvement. (It can also, of course, in less skilled hands produce uninteresting muddle.) A group of artists producing an opera on the stage creates a stimulus — the stage production. They need to commit themselves totally to the evolution of that stimulus through discussion, conceptual thinking, research, but they must, in the end, give it over to the recipients, the members of the audience. The artists in a sense lose control, but that is the glory and often the misery of being an artist. You don't own the piece any more — your audience member now does. Is it possible for an artist to be misunderstood or misinterpreted? This is a question that goes to the heart of the artistic exchange.

*Personal anecdotal case study number two:* After a performance of *Don Giovanni*, which I designed, I was accosted by a audience member — red in the face, veins throbbing. I thought, “Oh, great, now I'm going to cause the death of an irate operagoer.” He sputtered, “I didn't understand ANYTHING that you did in that production. Was Giovanni in a wheelchair because he had syphilis?” He went on and on. After a bit I gently stopped him gently, “Sir, you said you didn't understand anything, and here you have just give a quite thorough and detailed explanations of what it meant — to you.” “But is that what you meant?” “That makes no difference.” (Actually his explanation of Giovanni's wheelchair was a completely new thought for me, and in some ways a more interesting interpretation than what the director and I had discussed.) Pause. The furious red drained away. As he walked slowly away, he said, “Maybe I should go back and see this again.”

I had somehow given him permission to have his own thoughts, interpretation, to OWN the production for himself, which was his right... and responsibility. The power to take over and experience a piece in your mind is a joy and a rush. We live in culture which tells us all the time what to think and what things mean — critical reviews, experts' comments, labels on pictures in museum which explain what to think. Fear of being wrong, fear of appearing stupid, colors people's reactions and make them passive receptors. We as producers need to make each audience member unafraid, to give the control back to them. ☺



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# Arts Education Policy: A Primer

By Jennifer Katona

The current conversation around Arts Education Policy is a lively and often contentious one: with intense debate about schools racing to the top, parents waiting for Superman and policy-makers Leaving No Child Behind. Educators develop Blueprints for Reform and build Common Core standards — but what does all that mean?

To begin, it is helpful to make a distinction between policy initiatives and funding initiatives; while funding may influence policy and a new policy may indicate a need for a funding source, the two are not synonymous. To apply for federal funding, a state may have to make policy changes, such as extend the cap on charter schools, tie student test scores to teacher tenure or, most commonly, agree to adopt the new Common Core Standards for their state. While a policy could be in place for a long time, a funding source may run out and is temporary.

## Overview of Funding

The current funding source for education reform in our country is **Race to the Top (RTTT)** which was awarded in 2010 after an intense application process to 10 states: Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia.

State	Funding
Massachusetts	\$250M
New York	\$700M
Hawaii	\$75M
Florida	\$700M
Rhode Island	\$75M
District of Columbia (D.C.)	\$75M
Maryland	\$250M
Georgia	\$400M
North Carolina	\$400M
Ohio	\$400M

The Obama Administration has requested an additional \$1.35 billion in funding for Race to the Top in its 2011 budget proposal to fund RTTT's potential third phase.

\$4.35 billion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment (stimulus) Act of 2009 was designated for RTTT grants. Funding was given to accomplish four pillars: (1) Standards & Assessments (2) Data Systems (3) Great Teachers & Leaders (4) Turn Around Low Achieving Schools. (For more information on RTTT, visit [www.racetotop.com](http://www.racetotop.com).)

## Overview of Policy

The **Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA)** is the Federal Act on public education and was first enacted in 1965. ESEA was originally authorized through 1970; however, the government has reauthorized ESEA every five years since its inception.

Until 1994, the Arts were not included in ESEA. That year, arts education was finally included in the national conversation when Congress passed the **Goals 2000: Educate America Act**. This act made the arts one of the core content areas in which students should demonstrate competencies.

In 2002, President George W. Bush reauthorized the Act and renamed it **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**. It was intended to help close the achievement gap in the United States between performing and underperforming students by evaluating schools nationwide. The act was shepherded through the Senate by the late Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and received overwhelming bipartisan support in

Congress. One positive result of NCLB is that the arts are designated as one of the 10 “core academic subjects.” This designation qualified arts instruction for diverse federal grants and other financial support. There were unintended consequences of NCLB as well. The measure of accountability and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) were based solely on the students’ test scores on the state standardized tests in two subjects: math and literacy. As a result, although NCLB does not directly specify a decrease in arts funding, it has caused reallocation of most, if not all, funding to traditionally testable subjects.

Currently, the nation is still operating under NCLB. President Barack Obama has proposed the **Blueprint for School Reform** — a reauthorization of ESEA by Congress. The measure is being reviewed by Congress but despite some progress the news is not good for the arts. The Senate is moving the Blueprint through on a bipartisan basis as one large bill. In the House, lawmakers are tackling the reauthorization through five smaller bills — three of which have passed through the committee already. The first bill eliminated the arts and education language and the line item for arts education has been eliminated. More information can be found online at [www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/index.html).

### **Common Core Standards**

The most talked about educational initiative (not policy or funding related) is the development of the **Common Core National Standards**, which is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators and pedagogical experts to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare students for college and the workforce. (For more general information, visit [www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards).) The Common Core are national standards for K-12 education. They have been successfully developed in math and literacy, and social studies and science are next in line. At this time, there is no indication that the arts will have their own set of Common Core standards. It is important to note that the Common Core are simply standards — they are not a mandated national curriculum. The Common Core will be implemented in September 2011 in the 44 States that have adopted the standards. (States which have not adopted Common Core are Washington, Texas, Montana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Virginia and Alaska.) The Literacy component of the Common Core is divided into K-5 English language arts (ELA), 6-12 ELA and 6-12 literacy of science and social studies/history, as well as technical subjects. For arts educators, the literacy common core offers the greatest potential for arts engagements, as the standards include sections on reading, writing, speaking and listening. For example, a standard from second grade ELA includes: *SL.2.5. Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings.* For a more comprehensive look at the standards, visit [www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards).

### **What does this mean for your organization?**

So how will all of these developments affect arts education programming in the 2011-2012 academic year? In terms of the fiscal climate, if line items for arts education are zeroed out on the federal level, this will trickle down to states and municipalities, giving schools fewer resources for field trips, guest artists and residencies. One approach is to focus on partnerships between schools and cultural organizations. Additionally, cultural organizations can look to other organizations for partnerships — it is a particularly good year to share resources. Some large businesses and corporations such as Target and Capital One are starting to provide private funding for the arts. The Foundation Center and Grantmakers in the Arts are two organizations which assist with grant opportunities.

The second way schools will be affected this coming year will be in time allotted for instruction. Still operating under NCLB, schools remain under pressure to perform in two specific content areas, and these constraints limit their ability to offer other less “vital” subjects. Now that most schools incorporate the Common Core, there is a need to assess students on several levels (reading, writing and presentation). Cultural organizations can help school actively engage student learning, particularly around language and the presentation of student work. Many schools will be looking for assistance on how to assess student presentation most effectively; while this is an area new to many teachers, it is a common part of arts curriculum. In the Common Core, students are assessed on

### **What can you do to advocate for more arts education funding?**

Advocacy can happen on many levels from inside the classroom to on the Hill with Congress. On the school level it is important for arts administrators, teaching artists and classroom teachers to continue to be informed on the current state of arts education and the most recent research on the benefits of an arts education. On the State and Federal level it is imperative that everyone in the field continue to encourage policy makers to vote for bills that support arts education. Many organizations are actively disseminating information on how to contact local politicians to lobby for arts education. In the age of Facebook and Twitter it is easy to stay current; a few suggested sites are Performing Arts Alliance, Americans for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and Arts Education Partnership, as well as your state’s arts organization. To stay current on general educational policy, bookmark [www.edutopia.org](http://www.edutopia.org), [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org) and [www.gothamschools.org](http://www.gothamschools.org).



their ability to make eye contact, project their voices, clearly communicate and have a strong command of language — skills inherent to a performing arts curriculum. Cultural organizations can offer workshops, professional development and intensives for teachers and administrators on how opera, which uniquely combines language arts, music, visual arts, drama and movement, can be used as a medium to explore subjects more traditionally held as vital and measurable. ©

*Jennifer Katona is the director of the graduate program in Educational Theatre at the City College of New York (CUNY).*

*OPERA America provides a number of ways to stay informed and engaged with continuing developments in arts education policy and advocacy.*

The **Advocacy and Public Policy** section of the OPERA America website includes an Issue Center, featuring legislative briefs on items especially important to the arts and arts education. These briefs include background information and talking points in support of federal funding for specific arts programs.

OPERA America is a founding member of the **Performing Arts Alliance**, whose issue center and action alerts provide additional information and a convenient way to contact your elected officials. For more information, visit [www.theperformingartsalliance.org](http://www.theperformingartsalliance.org)

As a member of the **Arts Education Partnership** Advisory Committee, OPERA America represents the needs and concerns of member companies in conversation with other national leaders in arts education, and disseminates important field-wide findings.

The **OPERA America Education Listserv** ([operaed-l@culturemail.org](mailto:operaed-l@culturemail.org)) and Education Forum provide opportunities for opera education professionals to interact and exchange strategies and success stories, bringing the field to new heights. The next Education Forum will meet in January 2012 in New York City.

**Webinars** and education-specific sessions at *Opera Conference 2012* provide further information on best practices in creating arts education programs and sustaining successful partnerships with schools. To learn more, visit [www.operaamerica.org](http://www.operaamerica.org).

For more information, please contact Laura Day Giarolo, Director of Learning and Community Engagement ([LDay@operaamerica.org](mailto:LDay@operaamerica.org)) or Brandon Gryde, Director of Government Affairs ([bgryde@operaamerica.org](mailto:bgryde@operaamerica.org)).





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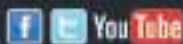
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# RECENTLY PUBLISHED

BY ALEXA B. ANTOPOL

**George Szell: A Life of Music**  
Michael Charry  
University of Illinois Press  
ISBN13: 9780252036163

This volume is a full biography of George Szell. From child prodigy pianist and composer to world-renowned conductor, Szell's career spanned seven decades, and he led most of the great orchestras and opera companies of the world. A protégé of composer-conductor Richard Strauss at the Berlin State Opera, his crowning achievement was his 24-year tenure as musical director of the Cleveland Orchestra. Under Szell's baton, the orchestra developed into one of the world's greatest ensembles, recording extensively and touring in the United States, Europe, the Soviet Union, South Korea and Japan. Michael Charry, a conductor who worked with Szell and interviewed him, his family and his associates over several decades, draws on this first-hand material and correspondence, orchestra records, reviews and other archival sources to construct a lively and balanced portrait of Szell's life and work from his birth in 1897 in Budapest to his death in 1970 in Cleveland.

**Richard Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde***  
Arthur Groos  
Cambridge University Press  
ISBN13: 9780521437387

What Nietzsche called the "sweet and terrible infinity" of *Tristan und Isolde's* basic nexus of longing and death has fascinated audiences since 1865. At the same time, its advanced harmonic language, immediately announced by the opening "Tristan chord," marks a

defining moment in the evolution of modern music. This handbook brings together seven leading international writers to discuss the opera's genesis and the libretto's relationship to late Romantic literary concerns, present an analysis of the Prelude, the music of the drama itself, and Wagner's innovative use of instrumental timbre, and illustrate the production history and reception of the music-drama into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The book includes the first English translation of Wagner's draft prose of the libretto, a detailed discussion of Wagner's orchestration and rare pictures from important and influential productions.

**Berg's *Wozzeck***  
Patricia Hall  
Oxford University Press  
ISBN13: 9780195342611

Although Berg decided immediately after seeing Büchner's play *Woyzeck* in May 1914 to set it to music, he did not complete his opera until 1922, with the Berlin premiere taking place in 1925. This book traces the composer's slow but determined progress. Using compositional sketches, diaries, notebooks and other archival material, the author reveals the challenges Berg faced — from his induction as a soldier in World War I to the hyperinflation of the 20s. In addition to the precise chronology of the opera, the sketches show how Berg derived large-scale form from the Büchner text, and how his compositional style evolved during the nine years in which he composed the opera. A comprehensive visual database on the book's companion website of the extant sketches from seven archives in the United States, Germany and

Austria allows the reader to examine, for the first time, Berg's sketches in high resolution color scans.

**Opera Indigene: Re/presenting First Nations and Indigenous Cultures**  
Pamela Karantonis and Dylan Robinson, Editors  
Ashgate Publishing  
ISBN13: 9780754669890

The representation of non-Western cultures in opera has long been a focus of critical inquiry. Within this field, the diverse relationships between opera and First Nations and Indigenous cultures, however, have received far less attention. *Opera Indigene* takes this subject as its focus, addressing the changing historical depictions of Indigenous cultures in opera and the more contemporary practices of Indigenous and First Nations artists. The use of "re/presenting" in the title signals a distinction between how representations of Indigenous identity have been constructed in operatic history and how Indigenous artists have more recently utilized opera as an interface to present and develop their cultural practices. This volume explores how operas on Indigenous subjects reflect the evolving relationships between Indigenous peoples, the colonizing forces of imperial power and forms of internal colonization in developing nation-states. Drawing upon postcolonial theory, ethnomusicology, cultural geography and critical discourses on nationalism and multiculturalism, the collection brings together experts on opera and music in Canada, the Americas and Australia in a comparative study of operatic re/presentation.



**The Empty Voice: Acting Opera**

Leon Major with Michael Laing

Amadeus Press

ISBN13: 9781574671957

Opera is a singer’s medium, but it comes to life on the stage. Composers write complex and detailed musical scores that are grounded in stories of passion and conflict, suffering and joy, forgiveness and despair. Acting is crucial to the experience audiences have in the theater. Thanks to supertitles, audiences can now easily follow the dialogue and the story. Therefore, more is expected from the singers than just great voices: we expect them to embody the characters they are singing. Without character, singers’ voices are empty, however beautiful they may be. This book offers opera singers a method and the tools that will assist them in developing their roles and the dramatic action of a scene. Musical and acting clues provide the foundation for creating characters. When singers study a libretto for acting clues and the score for musical clues, they gain greater insight into their roles and have a better understanding of the music and a finer perception of the dramatic shape of their scenes. The methods and tools are demonstrated in an analysis of key scenes from selected operas, which provide a foundation for more relaxed, confident and focused singing.

**James Levine: 40 Years at the Met**

Elena Park, Editor

Amadeus Press

ISBN13: 9781574671964

This collection of photographs and essays chronicles the career of Maestro James Levine over four decades at the Metropolitan Opera. Many of opera’s leading artists, including Pierre Boulez, Plácido Domingo, Renée Fleming, Robert Lepage, Leontyne Price, Teresa Stratas and Franco Zeffirelli, provide

insight into Levine’s musicianship and artistry. Joined with critical essays, the commentary is complemented by Levine’s own reflections on his work, his artistic collaborations, milestones at the Met and achievements such as building the Met orchestra and expanding the Met repertoire. The book is richly illustrated with hundreds of photographs of Met performances, rehearsals, curtain calls and backstage moments.

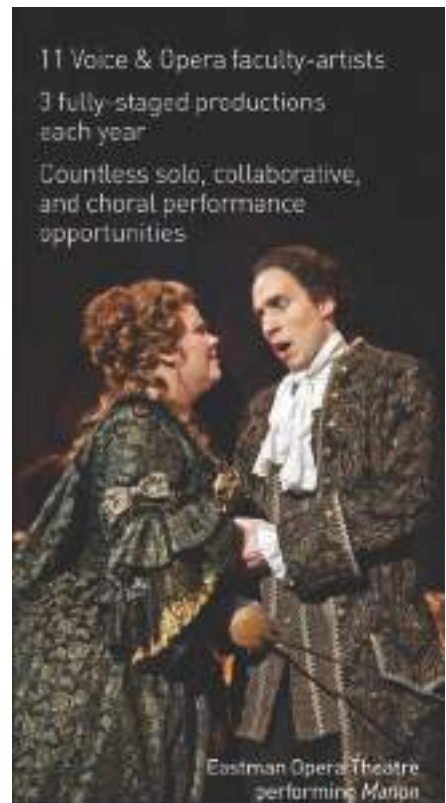
**Vocal Victories: Wagner’s Female Characters from Senta to Kundry**

Nila Parly

Museum Tusulanum Press

ISBN13: 9788763507714

*Vocal Victories* is a musicological comparison of all of Richard Wagner’s great female characters, from Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* to Kundry in *Parsifal*. It has long been customary to view these and other opera heroines as victims, because these women, as a rule, perish during the plot of the opera. A closer study of the music of the women — their singing and the orchestral voices that surround them — reveals, however, that it is in the female characters that the new and groundbreaking musical material comes into being, and that the women are far more in command of the development of the works. *Vocal Victories* claims that Wagner was far ahead of his time in terms of equality between the sexes, and the musicological analyses are supported by quotations from the composer’s own writings, so that a picture of Wagner as a radical critic of the oppressive patriarchal society emerges clearly and unmistakably. The feminist approach to the material also provides an opportunity for new aesthetical and musical readings of the works — readings which have been characterized as breaking new ground in Wagnerian research. 🍷



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