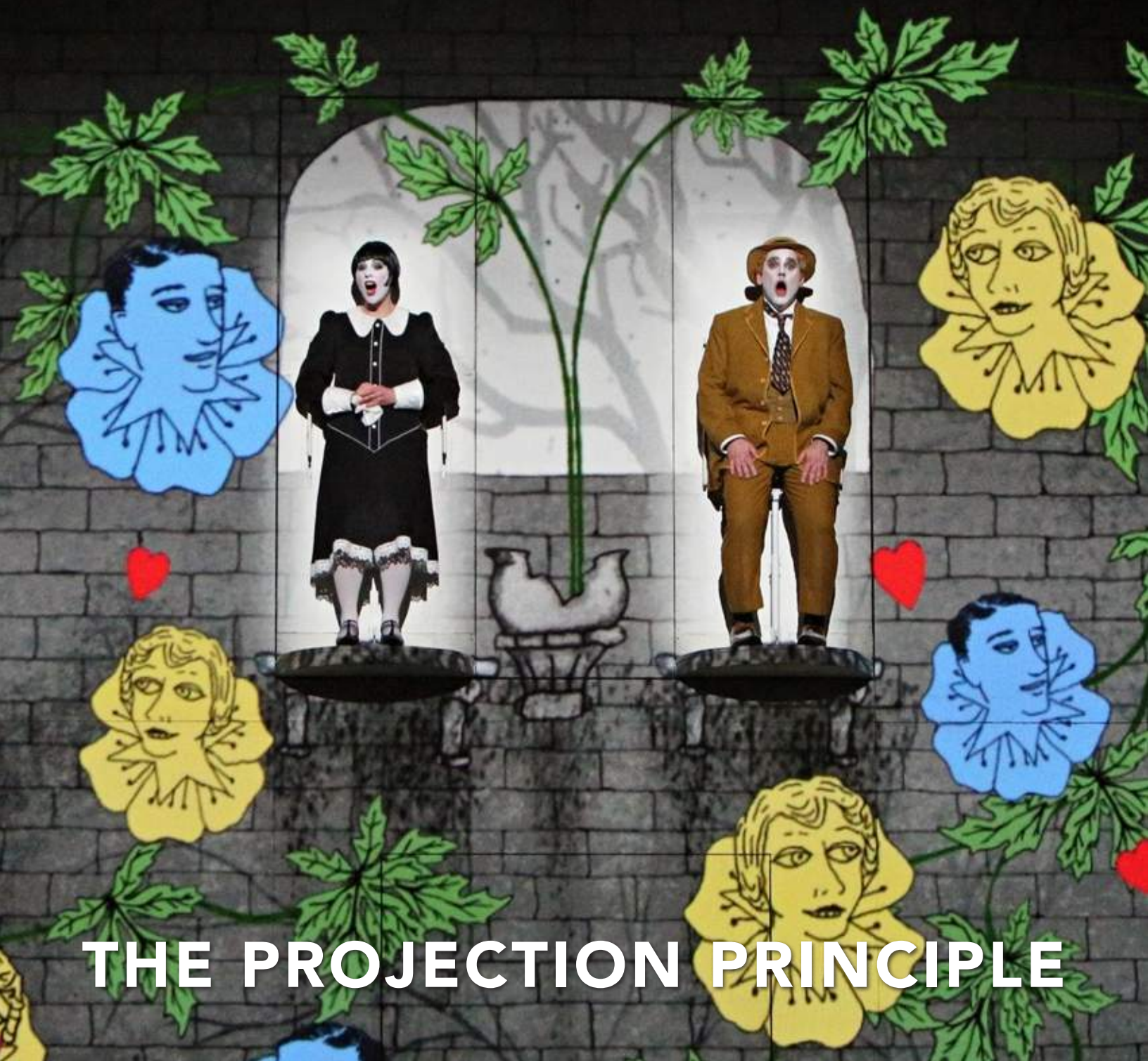


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FALL 2016

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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ON THE COVER

Minnesota Opera's 2014 presentation of *The Magic Flute*, a co-production with Los Angeles Opera, with Layla Claire as Pamina and Andrew Wilkowske as Papageno. Scenic design and costumes: Esther Bialas.

Animations: Paul Barritt. The Suzanne Andrade/Barrie Kosky production, originally staged at Komische Oper Berlin, was directed at Minnesota Opera by Tobias Ribitzki. (Photo: Michal Daniel for Minnesota Opera).

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GREAT THINKERS, PERTINENT THOUGHTS



As our members open their fall seasons, OPERA America embarks on a very exciting period of planning and investment that will take us through Opera Conference 2017 in Dallas and onward toward our 50th anniversary in 2020. We are guided in this work by two great thinkers. It was Albert Einstein who defined insanity as “doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results.” As opera company leaders work to find secure artistic and financial footings, we have realized together that performing the same operas in the same theater season after season, without variation, leads to organizational fatigue and fragility. In order to increase attendance among new and younger audiences, and to expand our service to our communities in ways that demonstrate our public value, we need to experiment with new works, alternative venues and new strategies in the areas of fundraising, marketing, education and governance.

The Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation has provided OPERA America with tremendously generous multiyear support that will enable us to invest in the evaluation and documentation of innovative opera company projects that hold promise for the entire field. Each year beginning this spring, we will award grants totaling \$1.5 million in support of strategic experimentation. Including the Repertoire and Audience Development grants from our Opera Fund endowment, Discovery and Commissioning grants for female composers made possible by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, and New Works Exploration Grants supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, our total grantmaking to members this year will be over \$2 million, making OPERA America one of the most important opera funders in the country. We are working to refine guidelines and assessment techniques to improve learning industry-wide and build our capacity to do different things that will lead to “different results.” Einstein would be pleased.

Lewis Carroll said that “if you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” Taking these words to heart, we have launched a thoughtful review of OPERA America’s vision, core values and capacity for realizing its goals. Through surveys, conference calls and meetings of a Strategy Committee that will involve over 100 members, we will chart a course for OPERA America that responds to current challenges and looks ahead to position the field for success in the ever-changing environment we anticipate. The founders of OPERA America in 1970 could not have envisioned a field as large, diverse and vital as the one we see today, nor could they have imagined that OPERA America would grow from a simple production directory into the comprehensive support organization it has become. We have done well, thus far, in “knowing where we’re going” and look forward to realizing a new set of goals for OPERA America, the field and the art form.

OPERA America depends for its success on the active participation of members. I look forward to hearing from many of you in the course of the season ahead and send best wishes for a successful 2016–2017 season.

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

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO



JESSIE BAUTERS, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER

Librettist Gene Scheer, director Leonard Foglia and composer Jake Heggie at the CU New Opera Workshop of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

SCHOOL DAYS FOR OPERA COMPANIES

"When I first heard it was three weeks long, I thought, 'What are we going to do with all that time?'" Jake Heggie says. The composer set off in late May to the University of Colorado, Boulder, for a three-week workshop of his new work, *It's a Wonderful Life*. Slated for a December premiere at Houston Grand Opera, the opera was the focus of this year's CU New Opera Workshop (CU NOW), which since 2010 has linked opera creators with students from CU's School of Music. Headed by Leigh Holman, director of CU's Eklund Opera Program, CU NOW is one of a number of programs nationwide that link conservatories with opera companies, to the benefit of all parties involved.

Heggie soon discovered that CU NOW's three-week time frame, however luxurious, was hardly excessive. It allowed him and his librettist Gene Scheer, along with director Leonard Foglia, the opportunity to put *It's a Wonderful Life* in top working order. HGO Artistic and Music Director Patrick Summers, scheduled to conduct the work's premiere, showed up for the final day of the workshop. "It's the closest thing imaginable to having Broadway previews," Heggie says. "I could get up early in the morning, write for several hours, then hear it that afternoon. I'd cut

a beat from a measure, and suddenly the drama came into better focus. Or write a new section, and see the scene spring into life with greater clarity. We wound up using every single second."

The students who participate in CU NOW get paid for their efforts. (If no suitable student is on hand for a particular role, Holman will enlist a recent alum.) "The reason I started it is for the students," Holman says. "I feel it's malpractice today not to teach singers how to maneuver in the world of new opera."

"Nothing you can do as a performing artist can ever equal working with a live composer," says Summers. "It puts you in touch with the same creative impulse you have to ignite with Mozart and Handel, even though they aren't sitting there talking to you."

Opera Fusion: New Works, a partnership between the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) and Cincinnati Opera, performs a similar service for composers and librettists. Since 2011, the 10-day program, run by Robin Guarino, chair of opera at CCM, and Marcus Küchle, Cincinnati Opera's director of artistic operations, has fostered a blue-chip list of contemporary operas, including Douglas J. Cuomo and John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt*, Terence Blanchard and Michael

Cristofer's *Champion*, and Jack Perla and Rajiv Joseph's *Shalimar the Clown*.

The program, underwritten by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, has helped Cincinnati Opera, historically a company solidly grounded in standard repertory, to develop its commitment to new works. "I look at it as having expanded the brand of the company," says Evans Mirageas, Cincinnati Opera's artistic director. Two operas that have emerged from Opera Fusion: New Works — Ricky Ian Gordon and William M. Hoffman's *Morning Star* and Gregory Spears and Greg Pierce's *Fellow Travelers* — have gone on to have their premieres at Cincinnati Opera itself.

The educational benefits for CCM's students, in Guarino's estimation, are incalculable. She points to the workshop for *Champion*, which demanded improvisation from the singers, taking them well out of their "comfort zone." "It uses a different part of their brain," she says. "They're learning music they've never heard before, so they get to make all the choices. They learn to be real artists there."

"When we started, even my colleagues at CCM didn't know this would be the most interesting part of the opera program," Guarino says. "Now, the students are duking it out to get into it,

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rather than singing in *Marriage of Figaro* or *La bohème*.” One inducement: Mellon’s funding includes a budget for flying in producing partners, which means the students get seen by top industry figures. “They get the opportunity to be heard in the middle of the country,” says Guarino. “Geographically, it’s made Cincinnati a go-to place.”

In comparison with CU NOW and Opera Fusion: New Works, the collaboration between Opera Columbus and The Juilliard School is focused on talent, pure and simple. In an arrangement formalized earlier this year, students in Juilliard’s selective Artist Diploma in Opera Studies (ADOS) program have been guaranteed, at some point or other, an offer from the opera company. This coming season, tenor Miles Mykkanen will star in Opera Columbus’ *Abduction from the Seraglio* and mezzo Avery Amereau takes the title role in *Carmen*. Both are ADOS artists.

For Opera Columbus, which underwent a financial crisis early this decade and has now emerged lean and solvent, the partnership provides an opportunity to identify and cast top-level emerging talent. “It fits with our budget and the size of our opera house,” says Peggy Kriha Dye, the company’s general director, and herself a soprano. “My passion is helping young artists, which was a great motivation.”

The ADOS program has, through the years, fostered relationships with intendants and casting agents, but the Opera Columbus program represents its first formal partnership with a professional company. “It’s a fantastic opportunity for students that we can present as part of the package,” says Stephen Wadsworth, Juilliard’s director of opera studies. “These students are coming out into a landscape that’s sparsely populated with job opportunities: We’ve probably lost a third of the work that used to be available for singers in North America. This presents a great opportunity for them. And I like what it represents as a way of producing in the U.S.”

As Kriha Dye puts it: “We’re defining a new way for a regional opera company to be vibrant and relevant to the opera business.” ● — Fred Cohn



Bounce in Brooklyn (clockwise from top left): Jonathan Kirkland as Ike “The Flight” Harris and Charlotte Dos Santos as Sabrina; (l–r) Erick Patrick as Odell, Johnathan Kirkland as Ike, Todd Wilander as Coach Ellis, Curtis Williams as Ajax and Jacob Johnson as Akili; the cast, creative team and crew.

OPERA OUT OF BOUNDS

The basketball court and the opera stage may seem worlds apart, but for Grethe Barrett Holby, who conceived and directed *Bounce: The Basketball Opera*, free throws and high-flying arias are consonant elements of musical drama. “Basketball is a microcosm for life, for emotional issues — and that’s very operatic,” explains Holby, the founder of Ardea Arts/Family Opera Initiative, the producing organization. “The games are so physical and so dramatic, and I was interested from a theatrical point of view about what could happen on stage.” The piece had its three-performance premiere this June in the East Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn, on an outdoor basketball court in Paerdegat Park.

Based on the Greek myth of Icarus, *Bounce* tells the story of Ike “The Flight” Harris, a talented basketball player who is felled by gun violence but ultimately rises

above the challenges laid in his way. The score by Tomas Donker, Glen Roven and Daniel Bernard Roumain, setting Charles R. Smith Jr.’s text, fuses opera with hip-hop and the staccato rhythm of bouncing basketballs.

Bounce gave young amateurs — musicians and basketball players alike — the opportunity to perform alongside professional singers. Among the nearly 40 participants were high school students and members of the anti-violence group Gangstas Making Astronomical Community Changes. Holby aimed for the production to reflect the culture of urban basketball courts, where strangers often bond together for pickup games. “The basketball court is like a town square or a city square — you don’t know people and yet you interact with them,” she says. “It’s communal, and it’s rather extraordinary.” ●



HOT PROPERTIES

The financial structure of Brooklyn's National Sawdust, the cutting-edge performance space in the heart of hipster-haven Williamsburg, shows how vital real estate can be to a performing-arts institution. In the year since it opened, the venue has become synonymous with artistic innovation, presenting contemporary music and dance along with operatic events like the American premiere of the theatrical song cycle *Sága*, as well as the Anthony Roth Costanzo-curated evening *Orphic Moments*. But National Sawdust represents a vanguard not only in performance, but in funding, as well, with the building itself, a converted sawdust factory, as the key element in its financial structure.

Rather than donating money outright, the organization's underwriters have bought shares in the building and provide the space rent-free to National Sawdust. Since the property itself has been incorporated as a for-profit entity, the investors can't yet take a tax deduction. But five years down the road, the consortium plans to donate the space outright to the organization — at which

time, given the expected appreciation in the value of the property, the investors will be able to take a considerable tax write-off.

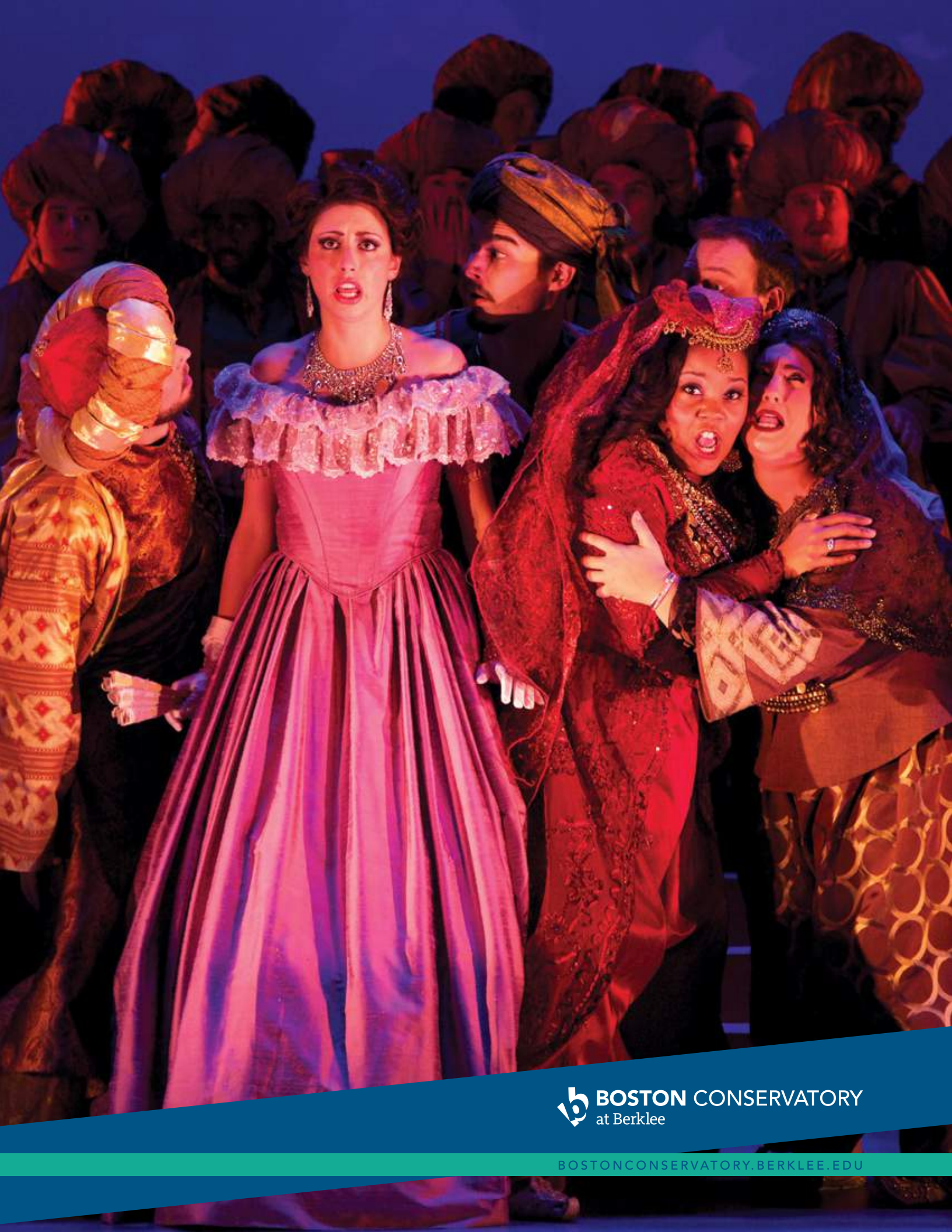
Still, tax benefits aren't the main inducement for investors, according to tax lawyer Kevin Dolan, cofounder and board chairman of National Sawdust. Instead, the financial structure provides insurance for the funders against the possibility that the fledgling organization will fold. "How do you protect people who put money into a new venture, without being sure it'll succeed?" Dolan asks. "You can give X million dollars to Carnegie Hall, which you're sure isn't going away. But here, if National Sawdust doesn't make it, they still have money in the real estate. They can sell their shares off at that point and give the money to somebody else."

By structuring their philanthropy as a real estate investment, the scheme gives funders an unusual amount of security. Dolan explains: "What happens down the road is anyone's guess. They could be dealing with a divorce or with estate taxes. This way, they aren't committed to staying in. They can turn to other

investors, or to the nonprofit itself, to buy them out. The main thing is to protect the downside for people who want to give money."

The benefit that Indianapolis Opera has found in real estate is relatively more straightforward. Its headquarters, the 25,000-square-foot Basile Opera Center, a converted Greek Orthodox church in the upscale midtown Meridian-Kessler neighborhood, serves the company as an office and rehearsal space, but also generates rental revenue from a diverse range of sources. The company rents out office space to other performing-arts organizations: Indy Film Fest, Encore Vocal Arts, the Indy Baroque Orchestra and Motus Dance. The 5,200-square-foot "Great Room" hosts parties and wedding receptions. An antiques show takes over the whole building for two weekends a year.

Philanthropist Bill Oesterle, co-founder of Angie's List, bought the building for Indianapolis Opera in 2008; he remains the owner, while the company covers maintenance and uses the building as it sees fit — including renting space. The arrangement suits the company's





Indianapolis Opera's Basile Opera Center

general director, Kevin Patterson, just fine. "I've been around enough opera companies to know that I don't want a building on my balance sheet," he says. "They don't provide enough liquidity to get out — I've seen buildings crush arts groups." Indianapolis Opera's rentals now generate \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year, and Patterson hopes to bring that figure up to 50 percent of the annual \$100,000 maintenance expense.

By contrast, Michigan Opera Theatre has found benefits in real estate ownership. The company rents out the Detroit Opera House itself to dance companies and touring Broadway shows. It owns two retail spaces and a restaurant, the Cadillac Cafe, that caters private events.

One holding that has proved to be a significant generator of cash is MOT's Parking Center. When the company first developed the facility, though, its main concern was less the revenue it would generate than the convenience it would provide for its patrons, who had to fight for parking spots with the crowds attending baseball and football games at nearby Comerica Park and Ford Field. "Parking is the last thing we want them to worry about," says Jason Warzecha, the opera house's director of operations. "It can be the best performance you've ever



The Detroit Opera House Parking Center

seen, but getting parking can make or break someone's experience." The two stadiums opened in 2000; in response to the parking crunch, the company bought the derelict former parking garage of Hudson's department store, demolished it, and built a state-of-the-art seven-story structure in its place. The facility opened in 2005.

On dark nights, sports fans fill the garage. But when the opera is on, patrons get first priority. The garage

represents an operational responsibility far afield from the usual concerns of an opera company. "Yes, it is a completely different part of the business," says Warzecha. "But we were already in the real estate business anyway." Patron experience aside, the investment has paid off: The garage generates close to \$1 million annually for MOT, proving that an arts organization can find real benefits in real estate. ● — Fred Cohn



BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Curtin

Soprano **Phyllis Curtin**, celebrated as an advocate of new music, died on June 5 at age 94. In a career spanning four decades, Curtin sang a diverse cross-section of canonic roles — ranging from Mozart’s heroines to the title role of Strauss’ *Salome* — while premiering numerous contemporary works and pursuing uncommon recital repertoire. She was closely associated with composer Carlisle Floyd, for whom she created the title role in *Susannah* and Catherine Earnshaw in *Wuthering Heights*. Curtin achieved international prominence in the 1950s after joining New York City Opera, where she appeared in several company premieres before departing in 1960. She taught for more than five decades at Tanglewood, beginning in 1964, and also held teaching posts at Yale University and Boston University College of Fine Arts.

Scenic and costume designer **Robert O’Hearn** died on May 26 at age 94. O’Hearn was best known for the productions he designed

for the Metropolitan Opera from the 1960s through 1980s, many of which were directed by Nathaniel Merrill. His credits at the Met include *L’elisir d’amore* (1960), *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1966), *Hansel and Gretel* (1967) and *Der Rosenkavalier* (1969), the last of which remained in the repertory for 44 years. O’Hearn was also a professor of opera studies at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music from 1988 to 2008.



METROPOLITAN OPERA ARCHIVES

Niska



METROPOLITAN OPERA ARCHIVES

Munsel

The coloratura soprano **Patrice Munsel** died on August 4 at age 91. Munsel was the youngest singer to ever debut at the Metropolitan Opera, singing Philine in *Mignon* in 1943 at age 17. Over the next 15 years, Munsel would appear more than 200 times on the Met’s stage and on tour, becoming

a favorite as Adele in *Die Fledermaus* and Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and also singing roles such as Lucia, Olympia and Gilda. In the 1950s, Munsel began to appear in musical theater, and she became a popular fixture on television, frequently appearing on *The Bell Telephone Hour*.

Maralin Niska, a leading soprano at New York City Opera from the 1960s to 1980s, died on July 9 at age 89. Niska first appeared at NYCO in 1967 as Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* and went on to sing 29 principal roles with the company, more than any other artist in its history.

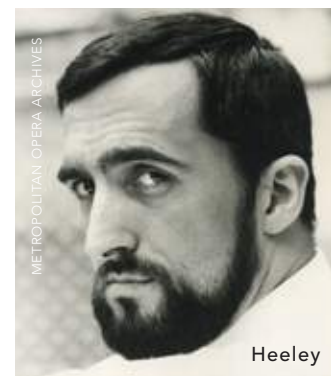


METROPOLITAN OPERA ARCHIVES

O’Hearn

She earned a devoted following for her dramatic abilities, garnering particular acclaim for her interpretation of Emilia Marty in Janáček’s *The Makropulos Case*, staged by NYCO in 1970. She also appeared periodically at the Metropolitan Opera throughout the 1970s in roles such as Violetta, Tosca, Salome and Musetta.

Desmond Heeley, the British-born set and costume designer, died on June 10 at age 85. He began his career



METROPOLITAN OPERA ARCHIVES

Heeley

at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he designed the costumes for Peter Brook’s groundbreaking production of *Titus Andronicus*, in 1955. Heeley went on to create theater, ballet and opera productions around the world for the next five decades. At the Metropolitan Opera he conceived productions of *Norma* (1970), *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1972), *Don Pasquale* (1978) and *Manon Lescaut* (1980), and for New York City Opera he designed *Brigadoon* (1986) and *South Pacific* (1987).

Elena Doria, longtime director of the Metropolitan Opera’s children’s chorus, died on July 27 at age 90. A soprano, Doria studied at Juilliard and in Italy before becoming a chorister at the Met in 1966. After 20 years with the chorus, she began directing the children’s

KUDOS

chorus, earning a reputation as a strict, though beloved, disciplinarian with exacting musical standards. She retired in 2009.

The Italian conductor **Edoardo Müller** died on June 24 at age 78. After starting his career as a pianist, he made his conducting debut in 1973, in Florence, and soon began appearing at leading houses around the world. He enjoyed a particularly fruitful relationship with San Diego Opera, where he appeared nearly every season from 1980 to 2011, conducting a total of 45 productions.

Italian soprano **Daniela Dessi** died on August 21 at age 59. Although her career was based in Europe, she sang 21 performances at the Metropolitan Opera between 1996 and 2010.

Opera and theater director **Kay Walker Castaldo** died on August 1 at age 67. With designer Boyd Ostroff, Castaldo created several productions for Opera Philadelphia in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Her work also appeared on the stages of Cincinnati Opera, Teatro Colón and New York City Opera.

Stewart Pearce, an administrator at the Metropolitan Opera and Metropolitan Opera Guild for nearly four decades, died on July 17 at age 65. Pearce started his career at the Metropolitan Opera Guild and then moved over to the Met in 1982, where his positions through years included director of planning and budgets and assistant manager of operations. He returned to the Guild as managing director in 2010 and remained in that post until his retirement in 2015. ●

The Italian government bestowed the title of *Cavaliere dell'ordine della Stella d'Italia* (Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy) on **Victor DeRenzi**, artistic director of Sarasota Opera. This distinction is given to those who have made profound contributions to promoting Italian culture throughout the world. The honor was awarded in recognition of Sarasota Opera's recently concluded Verdi cycle, which, over 28 years under Maestro DeRenzi's direction, presented every opera the composer wrote.



PARI DIUKOVIC

DiDonato

Mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato** won The Dallas Opera's 2016 Maria Callas Debut Artist of the Year Award in honor of her work in the world premiere of Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Great Scott*.

The Anti-Defamation League honored bass **Soloman Howard** with its Making a Difference Award for raising awareness of threats to voting rights through his performances in *Appomattox* at Washington National Opera last November. Howard portrayed the dual roles of Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther



JON ADIAHOE

Howard

King Jr. in Philip Glass and Christopher Hampton's newly revised version of the opera. In conjunction with the performances at WNO, Howard and fellow cast members visited local churches to perform excerpts and discuss voting rights.

Laura Karpman was elected to the board of governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, becoming the first female composer to serve in this capacity. In addition to her extensive work in movies and television, Karpman is the composer of a youth opera, *Wilde Tales*, and she is developing another opera, *Balls*, about the 1973 tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs. Both works were recipients of OPERA America's Opera Grants for Female Composers, which are supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.



ANN MARSDEN

Larsen

Composer **Libby Larsen** is the recipient of the 2016 McKnight Distinguished Artist Award, which carries a prize of \$50,000. Since 1998, the McKnight Foundation has given this annual award to Minnesota artists who have enriched the state's cultural life. Larsen has composed more than 500 major works, including 11 operas. ●

NEW WORKS

San Francisco Opera will present the world premiere of *Girls of the Golden West*, a new opera by **John Adams** with a libretto by **Peter Sellars**, in November 2017. The work, which will also be directed by Sellars, tells the story of three Gold Rush-era women whose lives intersect in a mining town in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Dallas Opera, Dutch National Opera and Teatro La Fenice are co-commissioners.

This January, Nashville Opera will raise the curtain on **Robert Paterson** and **David Cote's** *Three Way*, a co-commission with

American Opera Projects. This trio of one-act chamber operas, mixing drama and comedy, tells stories of sexual craving and connection. AOP will present the New York premiere at Brooklyn Academy of Music next June. John Hoopes directs the production.

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis has announced the commission from **Ricky Ian Gordon** and **Michael Korie** of a new performing edition of their 2007 *The Grapes of Wrath*. This two-act version, written for scaled-down forces, will debut in St. Louis in June 2017. ●

Jesse Blumberg and Kelly Kaduce in *The Grapes of Wrath*, in its three-act version at Minnesota Opera in 2007.



MICHAEL DANIEL

T R A N S I T I O N S



Ainsley



Carreón-Robledo



Corrigan



Graham

The Atlanta Opera has welcomed a new board chair: **Cathy Adams**, executive vice president and COO of Federal Home Loan Bank Atlanta. She succeeds Bill Tucker.

Robert Ainsley has joined Washington National Opera as director of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program and the American Opera Initiative. He was previously head of music at Minnesota Opera, as well as head of music staff and chorus master at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Jessica Blackman has been promoted from annual fund manager to development director at Opera Omaha.

Pittsburgh Opera has hired **Kathleen Butera** as its new director of development.

OPERA San Antonio has named **Enrique Carreón-Robledo** as its new general and artistic director. Carreón-Robledo was artistic director of Opera in the Heights from 2011 to 2014.

Patrick Corrigan, formerly CEO of Pacific Opera Victoria, has assumed the role of general director of Opéra de Montréal.

Kentucky Opera has appointed as its new general director **Ian Derrer**, previously artistic administrator at The Dallas Opera.

At The Glimmerglass Festival, **Christopher Devlin** has transitioned from principal coach/accompanist to head of music staff.

The American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) has named **Leonard Egert** as its new national executive director. He comes to the organization from SAG-AFTRA of Northern California.

Alexander Farino has been promoted from production manager to director of production at Opera Philadelphia.

The board of Florentine Opera Company has extended the contract of General Director **William Florescu** an additional five years, from 2019 through 2024.

Houston Grand Opera has named **Carleen Graham** as director of HGOco, the company's community collaboration and education initiative. She comes to HGO from SUNY Potsdam, where she directed the university's Crane Opera Ensemble.

Steven Grair has been appointed Sarasota Opera's new director of production.

Dennis Hanthorn has been hired as chief advancement officer for Florida Grand Opera. He previously held general directorships at Opera Naples, The Atlanta Opera and Florentine Opera Company.

Arizona Opera has hired **Greg Hirsch** as director of production. He was previously managing director at Palm Beach Opera.

At Opera Orlando, Education Director **Robin Jensen** has taken on the additional role of music director.

Jay McMahon has joined Tri-Cities Opera as director of development.

The Glimmerglass Festival has appointed **Allen Perriello** as the new director of its Young Artists Program. He previously directed the young artist program at Arizona Opera.

Doug Provost has taken up the post of director of production at Fort Worth Opera after having served in the same capacity at Arizona Opera.

Washington Concert Opera has selected as its new executive director **Caryn Kerstetter Reeves**. She comes to WCO from The Glimmerglass Festival, where she served as associate director of institutional advancement.

Minnesota Opera has hired **Mallory Roberts** as director of development, leadership and institutional giving. She most recently served as director of development at Arizona Opera.

Pacific Opera Victoria has appointed **Ian Rye**, previously the company's director of artistic administration, as its new CEO. Rye was a participant in OPERA America's 2012 Leadership Intensive program.

Soprano **Brooke Tolley** has been named director of operations at Opera Roanoke.

Shannon Walenta has been hired as Opera Omaha's new managing director. She previously served on the company's artistic staff from 1995 to 2005.

At Palm Beach Opera, **David Walker** has been promoted from director of institutional advancement to managing director.

Austin Opera has appointed as interim general director **Jane Weaver-Sobel**, a nonprofit consultant who previously held positions as general director of Texas Opera Theater and production manager of Houston Grand Opera.

Kristin Wisniewski has joined Pensacola Opera as director of marketing.

The Dallas Opera has announced the participants in the second annual Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors: **Elizabeth Askren, Mihaela Cesa-Goje, Alexandra Cravero, Tianyi Liu, Chaowen Ting** and **Zoe Zeniodi**. They will take part in two weeks of master classes and career advancement seminars later this fall. ●



Derrer



Rye



Walker

Corrections: Knoxville Opera's April production of *Tosca* did not mark the opera's first site-specific performance, as stated in the Summer 2016 article "Knoxville's Roman Holiday." In 2014, Pacific Opera Project also offered a *Tosca* with each act set in a different location.

In the same issue, the article "Do Composers Need Publishers?" misidentified Zizi Mueller's current role at Boosey & Hawkes. She now serves as a consultant to the company.

PREMIERES THIS SEASON

DAVID LANG

the loser

Libretto by the composer
Adapted from the novel
by Thomas Bernhard
Translated from German
by Jack Dawson

BAM I 2016

Next Wave Festival

September '16

MISSY MAZZOLI

Breaking the Waves

Libretto by Royce Vavrek
Based on the film by
Lars von Trier

Opera Philadelphia

September '16

AVNER DORMAN

Wahnfried

Libretto by Lutz Hübner

**Badisches Staatstheater
Karlsruhe**

January '17

THOMAS MORSE

Frau Schindler

Libretto by Kenneth Cazan

**Staatstheater am
Gärtnerplatz**

March '17

BRIGHT SHENG

Dream of the Red Chamber

Libretto with
David Henry Hwang

San Francisco Opera

September '16

DONNACHA DENNEHY

The Hunger

Libretto by Asenath
Nicholson, Anon.
Interviews with Noam
Chomsky, Paul Krugman,
Maureen Murphy,
Branko Milan

BAM I 2016

Next Wave Festival

September '16

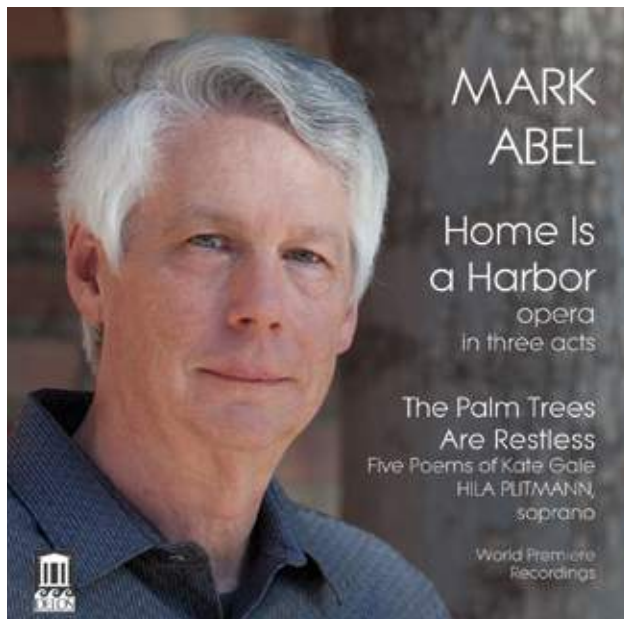
STEWART COPELAND

The Invention of Morel

Libretto by
Jonathan Moore
Based on 'La invención
de Morel' by
Adolfo Bioy Casares

Chicago Opera Theater

February '17



MARK
ABEL

Home Is
a Harbor
opera
in three acts

The Palm Trees
Are Restless
Five Poems of Kate Gale
HILA PLITMANN,
soprano

World Premiere
Recordings

"Abel's lucid narrative and vibrant vocal lines ... make (*Home Is a Harbor*) an affecting experience."

— **Gramophone**

"I am in hopes of seeing (*Harbor*) performed because its exquisite score cries out for the addition of visual creativity."

— **Fanfare**

"Mr. Abel is at the forefront of (California's) musical life."

— **American Record Guide**

Home Is a Harbor, Mark Abel's poignant new opera, is a coming-of-age story and portrait of contemporary America. Set in coastal California and New York, it focuses on early success, the financial crisis, and the human cost of the war in Afghanistan.

The Palm Trees Are Restless, a cycle setting powerful poems of Kate Gale, is sung by Grammy Award-winning soprano Hila Plitmann, known for her work with today's top contemporary composers.

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Leadership

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SCOTT SUCHMAN FOR WNO

Francesca Zambello, artistic director of Washington National Opera, takes charge of WNO's 2016 *Ring* cycle.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO LEAD TODAY'S OPERA COMPANIES? LEAH D. BARTO GETS ANSWERS FROM THE PROS.

“This work is so emotional, and so hard,” says Joseph Specter, general director of Arizona Opera. His words suggest the burdensome demands placed on today’s opera leaders. A general director has to combine the attributes of a confident businessperson, a dynamic relationship-builder and an artistic visionary.

When a board seeks to fill this crucial job, it is making the most important decision of any in its portfolio: one that can potentially shape a company’s identity and health for years to come.

No longer can an impresario focus on planning an exciting season while leaving the gritty business of finances to others. The financial pressures that today’s opera companies face call for a different leadership model. “In decades past, American companies would look for fantastic artistic knowledge,” says Bruce D. Thibodeau, president of Arts Consulting Group. “Now, the answer is always about increasing revenue.”

General directors now share many of the qualities of their CEO counterparts in the for-profit world. That’s what Tomer Zvulun, general and artistic director at The Atlanta Opera, discovered in 2015, when he attended the Harvard Business School’s leadership development program. “I was with hundreds of people from Microsoft and Walmart and Kmart,” he says. “You discover that you’re all dealing with the same things running a company: strategy, marketing, business development.”

The job necessarily entails maintaining productive relationships with the company’s many constituencies. A general director has to be able to connect with staff, artists, audiences, the media and the community at large. A board will be looking for a candidate who can partner with the big-personality theater director down the street, and negotiate with a brass-knuckled facility representative when contract time comes up. “Three words describe the key to the job,” says Zvulun. “People, people, people.”

One core constituency is the donor base — the people who, more than any others, keep today’s companies afloat. Ticket sales form a continually decreasing portion of the revenue stream for most companies. (The era of the “50/50” company — a company that derives half its revenue at the box office — is long past.) The shift has made development increasingly central to the job. Candidates who come to the table with demonstrable

development skills have a definite advantage in the headhunting process. “Search committees want someone

“You can’t raise money just by saying ‘I’m the opera.’ If 70 percent of our revenue is contributed from the community, we better matter to them. The argument isn’t ‘Every community needs an opera company’; it’s ‘This is what we are doing and this is why.’”

— Deborah Sandler,
general director and CEO,
Lyric Opera of Kansas City

who can help raise money,” says Margaret Genovese, senior partner at Genovese Vanderhoof & Associates. “I can’t think of a single leader who is not part of development efforts.”



JEFF ROFFMAN FOR THE ATLANTA OPERA

Tomer Zvulun

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Ryan Taylor

“Everybody wants fundraisers,” says arts consultant Catherine French.

Which doesn’t mean that boards are recruiting directly from development departments. For all the M.B.A.-like

are your ideas for producing.”

Significantly, a good proportion of today’s general directors started on the creative side of the fence, as directors or performers. Both Joseph Specter and Ryan Taylor (president and general director of Minnesota Opera) entered the opera world as singers. Zambello and Zvulun continue to work as stage directors while running opera companies. “I personally think that a grasp of financial matters is a skill set you can acquire,” says Zambello. “What you *can’t* acquire is the ability to have ideas and implement them.”

The move from artist to administrator is not necessarily a wrenching one for these individuals. “Of course, it’s scary,” says conductor Steven Osgood, who took over as general and artistic director at Chautauqua Opera last year. “But it’s also scary to get up on the podium. As a conductor, you’re also already in a leadership position, making decisions that impact the entire group, so the general emotion of ‘Here we go; we have things to do’ is very familiar.”

When he consults with boards about the hiring process, Marc A. Scorca, OPERA America’s president/CEO, asks

“Madison Opera isn’t Kathryn Smith’s opera company; the company belongs to Madison. Part of our responsibility is to share the art form with our community.”

— Kathryn Smith,
general director, Madison Opera

qualities an opera leader needs to bring to the job, a vision for the company’s artistic path may prove to be the most important business skill of all, one that will affect all the various roles a general director has to play, fundraising included. “You can’t raise money if you aren’t passionate about something and don’t have an idea to sell,” says Francesca Zambello, artistic director of Washington National Opera, and artistic and general director of The Glimmerglass Festival.

Opera-company board members are often driven by their own passion for the art form. They’ll want to see a commensurate knowledge and involvement from a potential hire, and gain a sense of how that will inform the candidate’s artistic vision. “The board members will have seen five productions of *The Magic Flute*, and they’ll want to know your own opinion,” says French. “It’s a given that you know how to produce opera, but what matters now

“You can’t produce art without the infrastructure to make it happen, and you can’t have the infrastructure without offering things that people want to make happen.”

— Ryan Taylor, president and general director, Minnesota Opera

them whether they're looking for a "plumber" — brought on to fix immediate problems — or an "architect" — a person with a long-term vision for the company. In the long run, an effective general director will combine both qualities. But Keith Wolfe definitely saw himself as a "plumber" when he took charge of financially troubled Opera Birmingham in 2015. "You have to get in and get your hands dirty," he says. "You have to have the ability to stay calm. It may be easier to dream up a vision, but there's a certain enjoyment in tackling the 'now' as opposed to the big dream."



Steven Osgood

To assure the art form's relevancy to contemporary culture, today's leaders are discovering that they need to become ever more attuned to the communities they serve — a consideration that will guide the "architecture" they construct. That's what Specter realized in 2012, when he was brought in as a "plumber" at Austin Opera, charged with reversing the struggling company's fortunes. "The Austin community had become disconnected from the opera company, and vice versa,"

"How your shows perform isn't something you can plot out on a P&L spreadsheet. You have a limited amount of data to make some consequential business decisions. Some of it comes down to instinct: Does this feel right?"

— Joseph Specter, general director, Arizona Opera; former general director, Austin Opera

he says. He sought input from as many local sources as possible. One problem that he realized he had to remedy: a turn away from core repertoire that had alienated local operagoers. "Repertoire can't be about someone else's community," Specter says. "If I'm in Austin, I can't program a season with New York's perception as the sole driver."

In the end, cultural awareness may be the key for a contemporary opera leader. It's a quality that will fuel all the aspects of a general director's job: programming, marketing, education, community engagement, fundraising. In the words of Ann Owens, former executive director of Houston Grand Opera: "The opera leaders who, decades from now, will be remembered for having shaped the future of opera, are those who are willing and able to engage with our world's shifting cultural landscapes." ●

Leah D. Barto is the director of learning and leadership at OPERA America.

BOOTCAMP FOR EXECS

When the 14 members of OPERA America's 2016 Leadership Intensive class convened this August at the National Opera Center, they got a boot-camp-like education in the characteristics needed to take charge of an opera company. "The program is designed to build leadership skills and qualities — and we distinguish between the two," says President/CEO Marc A. Scorca. "Yes, a leader has to know about budgets, fundraising, marketing and artistic planning. But leadership also demands specific qualities: the ability to speak in public; the ability to run meetings so that you're able to form consensus; the ability to take a personal inventory of your strengths and weaknesses."

During the program's seven days, the professionals attended sessions on issues like financial management, building diversity within organizations, and the principles of good governance and board management. Professional coach Astrid Baumgardner led exercises in tapping into effective leadership styles. Director Dona D. Vaughn led a session on personal presentation: posture, attire, speaking techniques. Scorca himself conducted a tutorial in "cutlery management" at a nearby restaurant. "So much career advancement goes on over lunch and dinner," Scorca explains, "and so many young people haven't been taught the fine points of eating a formal meal."

One essential element of the program that won't be found on the schedule: the opportunity it offers for forming valuable, long-term professional ties. Scorca notes that when he started at OPERA America, many of the country's top general directors — like The Dallas Opera's Plato Karayiannis, Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ardis Krainik and San Francisco Opera's Lotfi Mansouri — had formed bonds with each other early in their professional lives. "In each cohort of the Leadership Intensive, we seek to create rapport among them, and across all the alumni, so that they think of themselves as close colleagues, able to call on each other for advice or to join hands on an artistic project," says Scorca. "We hope these professional networks will last through their entire careers."

The Leadership Intensive is generously sponsored by American Express.



ANDREW M. PRINZ

At the 2016 Leadership Intensive: Michael Blais, director of administration at Manitoba Opera, and Lydia Zodda, operations manager at Ash Lawn Opera.

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CONVERSATIONS

7:00 P.M. AT THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER

TU OCT 18 David Henry Hwang, librettist and playwright

TH DEC 8 Jamie Barton, mezzo-soprano

TH MAR 16 Thomas Hampson, baritone

TU APR 25 Renée Fleming, soprano

CREATORS IN CONCERT

7:00 P.M. AT THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER

TH SEP 29 Matthew Aucoin, composer

TH APR 6 William Bolcom, composer

EMERGING ARTIST RECITAL SERIES

7:00 P.M. AT THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER

TH NOV 3 Florentine Opera Studio Artists

TH MAR 2 Houston Grand Opera Studio Artists

TU MAR 28 Opera Index Vocal Competition Winner

TH APR 20 Arizona Opera Studio Artists

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Bass

THE PROJECTION PRINCIPLE



Minnesota Opera's 2016 *Rusalka*, with Kelly Kaduce. Stage direction: Eric Simonson. Projections: Wendall K. Harrington. Scenic design: Erhard Rom. Costumes: Kärin Kopischke. Lighting: Robert Wierzel and Paul Heckenmueller.

DAN NORMAN

No longer just a cost-saving device, projections have become an essential addition to the opera experience. Matthew Sigman reports.

The integration of projected imagery into scenic design is as old as opera itself, from shadow puppets silhouetted by candlelight in the 18th century, to cycloramas illuminated by twirling colored gels in the 19th century, to supertitles displayed above the proscenium in the 20th century. In the 1970s, directors and designers started using projections as an inexpensive way to evoke atmosphere, throwing rain and clouds across the stage picture — and sometimes onto the performers' faces.

But projections in opera today can be a more sophisticated proposition altogether, integrating the cutting edge of video technology into scenic design. They can merge with scenic elements to create an art-installation-like visual whole, as in the Met's William Kentridge-designed production of *Lulu*. Or they can dominate the stage image to make it seem like the media of film and staged opera have merged, as in Nashville Opera's *Florencia en el Amazonas*. "Projections are no longer a matter of cost savings, and they are no longer in the background," says composer Paola Prestini, who regularly integrates projections into presentations of VisionIntoArt, her New York-based interdisciplinary opera company. "They are part of the fabric of the work."

For *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, the Mason Bates/Mark Campbell opera set for a world premiere next summer at The Santa Fe Opera, projections were a foundational element. "This is an opera about a technological genius, and I felt

that [projection] technology had to be an integral component to the story," says librettist Campbell. He adds that projections also work logically with Bates' music: "Mason is known for brilliantly integrating electronic music into the orchestra. Not that you need electronic music to have projections, but it would seem strange to have electronic music without them."

Designer Vita Tzykun, charged with incorporating Ben Percy's projections into *Steve Jobs*, initiated discussions with Campbell early in the libretto's development to ensure the scenic elements fit the narrative. At a recent meeting of the creative team in Santa Fe, she was able to ask Bates to add music for transitions. Meanwhile, to her delight, Bates and Campbell attended a purely technical meeting. "They felt they needed to be there so we as a creative team can create a seamless experience," she says.

Campbell didn't initially anticipate using projections when he was working with composer Paul Moravec on *The Shining*, which had its premiere last season at Minnesota Opera. But his collaborative work with director Eric Simonson, scenic designer Erhard Rom and projection designer Percy led him to realize that the technology would be an effective means of enhancing the work's horror. The team adjusted the pacing of the story in Act I to let the visual effects build to a terrifying climax.

Rom used the projections not just to define place, but to extract psychological subtext. "Getting inside the character's head is what

you want to do," he says. "We are reacting to what's given and what we can reveal, what layers we can peel off to see things people didn't see before but are in the piece." The trick, he says, is to use projections strategically: "You have to enhance without distracting. If you tip it too far, it's not opera — it's people with a movie."

Such psychological depth has rarely been realized more fully than in South African artist William Kentridge's production of *Lulu* last season at the Met. Mining a variety of German Expressionist sources, Kentridge generated India-ink drawings of body parts — eyes, mouths, arms — that could be assembled and disassembled — flying in, flying out, fluttering — to represent Lulu as envisioned variously by her lovers and husbands, and by herself. Says Kentridge, "From this came the idea of the unstable Lulu as this unstable object of desire, never able to be what men who desire her hope for, and men falling short of what Lulu wants or needs or expects."

Projections can bridge the gap between the designer's aspirations and the company's resources. Andrea Cigni and Lorenzo Cutùli, the director-designer team behind last season's *Tosca* at Minnesota Opera, had originally envisioned using multiple painted drops. But Karen Quisenberry, the company's director of production, steered them toward projections: "I said, 'I can't hire a painter to do all of this, but I can buy two lenses that will cost \$12,000.'" The projections were sufficient to establish each setting, while allowing for special effects such as a lush, ominous sky. Says

Florencia en el Amazonas at New York City Opera, with (l-r) Elizabeth Caballero, Kevin Thompson, Lisa Chavez, Luis Ledesma and Sarah Beckham-Turner Rosalba, along with members of Ballet Hispanico's BHdos (below). Production: John Hoomes for Nashville Opera. Projections and lighting: Barry Steele. Scenic design: Cara Schneider. Costumes: Pam Lisenby.

SARAH SHATZ/NEW YORK CITY OPERA



Quisenberry: "The clouds were telling you 'They are going to die' even as the music was telling you 'They might get away.' I don't think the audience realized how much video we put into it."

Minnesota Opera's 2014 mounting of the Suzanne Andrade/Barrie Kosky production of *The Magic Flute*, which sent the singers cavorting through a projected cartoon-and-silent-movie landscape, scored a big hit with audiences of all ages, and particularly appealed to children. "It was in tune with the world they live in," Quisenberry says. "It wasn't a video game, but it was very visual and intriguing, and their brains were working while still getting the intensity of the music."

The production was such a success that the company brought it back last season.

For John Hoomes, CEO and artistic director of Nashville Opera, the choice to use projections for his staging of Daniel Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas* was both artistic and financial. "The piece is full of magic realism and is very dream-like," Hoomes says. "Other productions seemed too realistic. I wanted to do a more abstract version." Video incorporating performers was shot against a green screen in Nashville. The flowing Amazon River in the background was created by video artist Barry Steele using a high-definition camera mounted on a houseboat in the Everglades. A minimal array of technology was sufficient to create an immersive experience.

The tactic not only fit the artistic conception, but it made the production easily rentable for other companies: a potential source of revenue Nashville considers whenever it invests in new

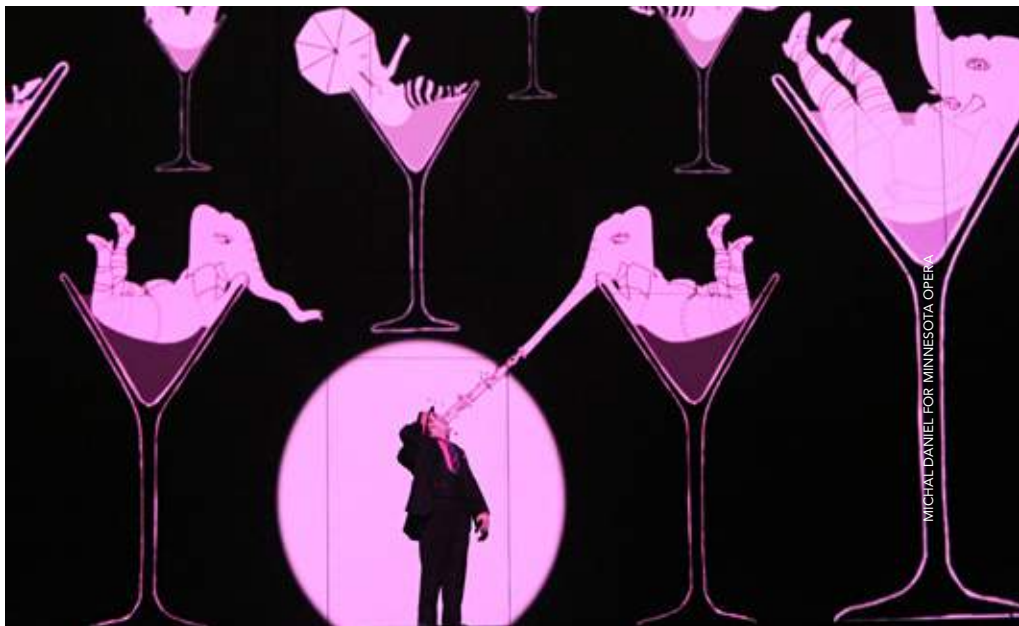
productions. "The original Houston [Grand Opera] production was wonderful, but it was too big and too expensive," says Hoomes. "We had to build something we could afford — and that other companies could do, too." Hoomes restaged the production this past summer for the recently reconstituted New York City Opera.

When a production like *Florencia* is designed for coproductions or future rentals, the math for follow-on presenters can be complicated. The projection scheme must be adapted for the height and width of their proscenium; depth of stage; distance and angles from front, back and side; obstructions from balcony rails and ornamentation; intensity of pre-installed equipment; noise generated by projector cooling fans; availability

of lenses; and staff resources to install and run the show. Those who create the original production have the advantage of determining the basic specs, but there are second-mover advantages too. "If you are second, you can watch the first production from the front and the side and the rear," says Quisenberry. "You really get a sense of how the projectors can be placed."

One problem that projections present is their demand on tech time. Unlike scenery — constructed in a shop and loaded in — they can only be fine-tuned during the madness of tech rehearsals. Ben Percy, who has worked on projections for *The Enchanted Island* and *Two Boys* at the Metropolitan Opera, says that the challenge of getting projections right is more acute for smaller companies,

The Magic Flute at Minnesota Opera, with Andrew Wilkowske as Papageno. Stage direction: Tobias Ribitzk. Scenic design and costumes: Esther Bialas. Animations: Paul Barritt.



MICHAEL DANIEL FOR MINNESOTA OPERA

who often get limited time in their venues. “You can do storyboards, but you don’t know what it looks like until you are in the theater,” he says. To speed the process, Percy devises pre-visualizations projected onto scenic models.

Even if producers like Nashville’s Hoomes can find cost advantages in projections, the technology doesn’t come cheaply. Depending on the necessary investment in equipment, content creation and staff, the cost can range between \$20,000 and \$200,000. The outlay includes not only the funds for the necessary hardware, software and talent needed to make the imagery, but the cost of hiring and training skilled workers to program and run the show. “Sometimes companies think that the projections might be a cheaper solution to using a painted drop,” says Erhard Rom, “but it turns out they aren’t because there is so much that goes into making the projections happen.”

Minnesota Opera’s *Magic Flute* required a 20,000-lumens projector at a time when the most powerful model that the company owned was only 5,000 lumens. In order to acquire the necessary piece of equipment, the production and development departments worked together to identify a donor willing to fund the purchase of the projector. Considering that the company used projections in all five of its productions last season, the purchase of the projector was undoubtedly a worthy investment. In general, ownership of equipment allows for greater control of placement and use, and, as capital investments, hardware can be depreciated.

Seattle Opera has shelled out heavily for a state-of-the-art projection infrastructure that, according to Assistant Technical Director Chris Reay, includes a d3 Technologies media server, six 20,000-lumens Barco projectors (with two sets of lenses for “short throw” and “long throw”) and two 14,000-lumens Barco projectors. Image signals are sent over an HD-SDI or fiber optic cable, with cues triggered via MIDI from an ETC Eos lighting console.

But with ownership comes the risk of obsolescence: Who knows if an iPhone theatrical projection app will emerge tomorrow? Renting

servers and projectors from a local supplier eliminates the capital investment and the risk of obsolescence, but day rates from vendors accustomed to corporate events can be exorbitant for opera companies. Only recently have New York-based vendors such as Sound Associates and WorldStage begun long-term rentals of projection equipment at theatrical pricing, making renting an economical choice, even with the cost of shipping added in.

And then there is the matter of talent. Some companies can afford Broadway-style consultants, while others find young graphic artists eager to make magic. At most companies, a member of the tech team is cross-trained. In Seattle, Chris Reay wears many hats: working with the creative team for concept development, creating imagery using a variety of software tools, hanging the projectors and running the show. His background is in lighting, but his content-creation skills are self-taught. He advises those aspiring to the craft to become proficient in the Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects) and advanced 3-D and animation programs such as Pixar RenderMan.

The combination of technology, stagecraft and score can enhance the theatrical experience of contemporary and canonical opera alike, but the collaborative alchemy can also form a transcendent work of art in and of itself. William Kentridge worked with his design team for 18 months to realize *Lulu*. But his ultimate collaborator was Alban Berg himself. Kindred spirits, both confronted totalitarian cultures (Kentridge with apartheid, Berg with Nazism), both crossed genres (Kentridge by combining print and animation, Berg by inserting film sequences into *Lulu*), and both have fused the romantic search for the soul to the consuming howl of modernity. All this, and opera too. ●

Matthew Sigman, former editor of *Opera America Magazine*, is a three-time winner of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for Music Journalism.

Notes on *Lulu*

“*Lulu* is a woman on whom men project their fantasies. But I didn’t start with this idea — I started with ink drawings on different sheets of paper. You could take the left-hand corner of one drawing and put it onto another; you could change the relationship between the eyes and the mouth and the nose; you could bend someone at the waist like a paper puppet.

“When we were preparing *Lulu*, the whole team came together for 10 days in my studio in Johannesburg to find the visual language for the



piece. Designer Sabine Theunissen and I had to make sure the set for *Lulu* worked as a space on its own, with surfaces and textures that could sustain simple theatrical light, but also be able to receive projections. We worked with a large-scale model that allowed us to sit, as it were, in the auditorium between the projector and the images. We tested many different surfaces and shapes. How busy could the wallpaper be, and still allow the projections to be visible? How could we bring color to the *paravents* — the Chinese screens? How could we integrate these colors with Greta Goiris’ vibrant costumes?

“Kim Gunning, who was the video controller for the show, worked like a musician. She had a video monitor to look at the conductor while she was following her own score, letting her keep in sync with the musicians and singers. Certain moments were directly linked to a note, a bar, a blast of music from a particular instrument. At others, it was desirable to have a more elastic sync between the music and the images. There would often be a wide shift in tempi between certain sections, and she was able to follow that.

“*Lulu* is, among all operas, the one where you need to know what everyone is saying. It’s not like a general idea is introduced and it gets repeated for 12 minutes, like in a Handel aria. It’s more like a movie thriller: You have to follow the story, or else you get very, very lost. That’s why we put the surtitles right on stage. You didn’t have to change your focal distance; you didn’t have to move your head up and down. The audience could understand the words just like in the cinema.”

— William Kentridge

THINK small



Second-stage efforts are helping opera companies expand their aesthetic reach and audience appeal.

Judith Kogan finds out how.

“We’ve changed the company from Turner Classic Movies to the HBO of opera,” says David Devan, general director of Opera Philadelphia. Since taking over the company in 2011, Devan has put an emphasis on looking well past the classics for Opera Philadelphia’s repertoire, with an emphasis on new works and experimental stagings. One of the company’s key tools for making the strategy work has been the expansion of its operations beyond its traditional home, the 2,300-seat Academy of Music.

While Opera Philadelphia has cut back on the number of its Academy productions — three each season instead of four — it now makes frequent use of the Kimmel Center’s 650-seat Perelman Theater: this September, for the world premiere of the Missy Mazzoli opera *Breaking the Waves*. This year the company will also present a radical adaptation of Verdi’s *Macbeth*, featuring the South African performance troupe Third World Bunfight, in the 450-seat Prince Theater.

Like Opera Philadelphia, opera organizations nationwide are using smaller, auxiliary spaces — “second stages” — to widen repertoire, attract new audiences and reshape company identity. San Francisco Opera this year launched the SF Opera Lab in the new, 299-seat Taube Atrium Theater. Cincinnati Opera staged its 2016 season in two adjacent spaces at the Aronoff Center for the Arts, using the 2,700-seat Procter & Gamble Hall for its standard-repertoire offerings and the 430-seat Jarson-Kaplan Theater for the world premiere of Gregory Spears’ *Fellow Travelers*. Some companies are also looking beyond conventional theaters for intimate, site-specific stagings of unusual repertoire. Like Boston Lyric Opera’s Opera Annex, which over the past seven seasons has presented seven different operas in six different spaces. Or Opera Philadelphia, which in 2015 turned a former box factory into a 200-seat theater for its Warhol bio, *Andy: A Popera*, and is now preparing “O17,” the

first incarnation of an annual “urban opera festival,” with performances in September 2017 slated for six venues across the city.

Second stages can host modern chamber classics like Peter Maxwell Davies’ *The Lighthouse*, staged by Opera Annex in 2012, or Leonard Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*, staged this year in Tri-Cities Opera’s 250-seat Savoca Hibbitt Hall. They can be ideal for early operas like Gluck’s *Orphée et Eurydice*: unlikely to fill a 2,000-seat theater, but with the kind of niche appeal that can easily generate a sell-out audience in a smaller venue, as it did when Opera Philadelphia staged the work in 2010. “With fewer seats to sell, you can take risks,” says Eileen Williston, director of external relations for Boston Lyric Opera.

No question, the strategy can bring artistic rewards. Chamber operas like *Fellow Travelers*, with its orchestra of 17 players, and Ana Sokolović’s *a capella Svadba-Wedding*, staged last season by SF Opera Lab, all but demand intimate venues. By drawing the audience closer to the action, a second-stage production can offer an artistic experience profoundly different from that provided by mainstage grand opera.

In doing so, second-stage offerings often attract new, younger audiences. Second-stage works — such as *Fellow Travelers* and *Andy: A Popera* being two examples — often probe issues that are part of contemporary culture. The typical sparseness of the physical productions can be an advantage for tuned-in, hip audiences accustomed to the abstractions of contemporary art. For young, uninitiated potential audience members, who may find traditional opera stiff or forbidding, a second-stage venue can prove to be a welcoming entry point.

“[Opera Annex] was designed to change preconceptions of the art form,” says Boston Lyric Opera’s Williston. “We had a hypothesis that by taking it out of the [big] theater, we might entice people who might have thought of opera as not for them, but for their parents.”

Smaller-venue stagings are seldom cost-savers, though. Production expenses may be lower, but so is potential box office revenue: The productions offer fewer seats to sell, and ticket prices are typically lower than for mainstage offerings. *Andy: A Popera* took three years to develop and cost over half a



Svadba-Wedding at the Taube Atrium Theater. Stage direction: Michael Cavanagh. Scenic design, projections and lighting: Alexander V. Nichols. Costumes: Kristi Johnson.

million dollars — a figure that, weighing dollars against projected ticket sales, made the budget proportionally equal to Opera Philadelphia’s more conventional offerings. “The aesthetic can change, the overall economics will change,” says Devan, “but you can’t phone it in. You have to put the same amount of resources as in the main opera house.”

Nonetheless, these productions can present a surprising economic benefit: the ability to attract patronage from unexpected sources. Devan says that Opera Philadelphia’s offsite productions have drawn a new population of donors: “venture philanthropists.” “They’re the philanthropists who are interested in supporting new ideas,” he says. “They have a tolerance for risk, and they’re motivated by advancing the institution in ways that meet the needs of the current time. They function like venture capitalists in that they see value in emerging ideas which have a high probability of impact on the community. That focus on early-stage support differentiates this from traditional, lower-risk philanthropy.”

While individuals supply the bulk of funding for Boston Lyric Opera’s mainstage efforts, Opera Annex productions are largely underwritten

by foundations with specific missions — the support of new work, of American composers or of particular communities, for example. Williston notes that certain foundations are particularly attracted by the Annex’s development of a new audience demographic. One (anonymous) family foundation, excited by the cultivation of new audiences, launched a successful four-year, million-dollar challenge.

The potential for community development drew foundation dollars to Tri-Cities Opera’s second stage. The company performs standard repertory at the 1,500-seat Forum Theatre in downtown Binghamton, New York. But two years ago, when Susan Ashbaker was hired as general director, she toured the company’s administrative home — a converted historic assembly hall in the economically depressed First Ward — and found a space that she realized had the potential for chamber opera. “It needed a lot of work, but it was a gem,” she says. She started modestly, with Poulenc’s 40-minute *La Voix humaine*, performed with piano accompaniment. It drew between 20 and 40 people on each of four nights. Things picked up with *Speed Dating Tonight*, a one-act opera by American composer Michael Ching that

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drew an audience of up to 60 for each performance. A range of community foundations quickly saw the initiative's potential for neighborhood development, providing funding that allowed the opera company to install lighting and HVAC systems, along with new windows and doors. A paint store donated paint. Now Savoca Hibbitt Hall regularly sells out, as it did with the 2016 double bill of *Trouble in Tahiti* and *The Telephone*.

Michigan Opera Theatre's offsite activities have found success in attracting funding from donors interested in community engagement. The company takes small-scale productions — Robert Xavier Rodriguez's *Frida* in 2015, Copland's *The Tender Land* last season and Adamo's *Little Women* scheduled for 2017 — to performing arts centers in outlying towns, attracting audience members who typically wouldn't visit the Detroit Opera House. These endeavors have won support from community-minded funders like DTE Energy, the Mellon Foundation and the Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan.

As satisfying as it can be to experience opera in an intimate second-stage environment, a site-specific staging can pack an extra aesthetic wallop, a cannily chosen site lending an atmospheric effect unavailable in a conventional

performing space, as in Opera Annex's *The Lighthouse*, staged in the Kennedy Library's Smith Hall in front of a wall of windows overlooking the city's harbor. "O17," among its other offerings, will include a double bill staged in two separate spaces at the Philadelphia Museum of Art: Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* in its medieval cloister and Lembit Beecher's *I Have No Stories to Tell You* in its Great Stair Hall. The festival will also include a to-be-announced commissioned work, specifically tailored to the Barnes Foundation galleries.

In such instances, the event begins the moment you arrive. "Site-specific staging gives us more variables to play with, more toys in the sandbox," says Bradley Vernatter, Boston Lyric Opera's director of production. But the approach presents a new set of challenges at each outing. Virtually every aspect of venue construction — where to put exits, how to create effective sightlines — needs to be considered and built from scratch. When Opera Annex staged Frank Martin's *The Love Potion* in Brookline's Temple Ohabei Shalom, the production team had to strip the sanctuary of its pews, level the floor and install an electrical system and generator. That was just the beginning: After that, they installed a stage, lighting system, truss system and 371 seats. All of this,

Boston Lyric Opera's 2012 *The Lighthouse*, staged in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Stage direction and production design: Tim Albery. Scenic design: Camellia Koo.



RANDY CUMMIN
BUNN HILL PHOTO

ERIK JACOBS

of course, needed to meet the city's electrical and fire codes. "When you talk about a production budget, people think sets, props, costumes," Vernatter says. "But with site-specific operas, the majority of our energy and finances go into infrastructure."

The productions invite nimbler, more innovative marketing strategies than their mainstage counterparts. The audiences are younger, and more likely to respond to digital messaging than to print or broadcast ads. Opera Annex posts on social media and even hangs posters in coffee houses. "It's a little more grass-rootsy," Williston says. The Opera Annex audience's buying patterns also differ from those of Boston Lyric Opera's mainstage operagoers: less likely to plan far in advance; more likely to buy on the spur of the moment. In response, the marketing team has put special emphasis on strategies like waitlists, standing-room tickets and discounts.

Second-stage efforts have the potential not just to succeed in



RANDY CUMMINGS/BUNN HILL PHOTO

Tri-Cities Opera's 2016 production of Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* at Savoca Hibbitt Hall, with Mary Beth Nelson (center) and company. Stage direction: Carleen Graham. Scenic design: AmarA*jk.

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Opera Philadelphia's 2015 world premiere of Heath Allen and Dan Visconti's *Andy: A Popera*, with Kristen Bailey and Mary Tuomanen. Libretto and stage direction: John Jarboe. Scenic design: Oona Curley. Videos: Jorge Cousineau. Costumes: Rebecca Kanach. Lighting: Mike Inwood.

their own right, but to advance a company's overall mission. When Fort Worth Opera in 2015 mounted the David T. Little/Royce Vavrek chamber opera *Dog Days* at the 500-seat Scott Theatre, it primed audiences for the 2016 world premiere of the team's *JFK*, to be staged at the 2,056-seat Bass Performance Hall. Such projects can serve as testing grounds not only for talent, but also for development and marketing strategies. "It's a way for the whole organization to test ideas — not just when the lights go down, but from the initial contact with audience members to the follow-up after the performance," says Elkhanah Pulitzer, director of programming at SF Opera Lab. "It could be the development department testing a new way of gifting from phones, or the communications department exploring new delivery methods for programs.

What are the ushers wearing? What drinks should we serve? The idea is to encourage everyone to think creatively about every aspect of the user experience."

"Second stages are a viable way to innovate," Pulitzer says. "That's why they're so vital." Devan's "HBO of opera" construction makes a valuable point: Second-stage productions are proof that opera is now a multi-channel universe. ●

Judith Kogan, winner of an ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for music journalism, is a freelance writer on culture. As a harpist, she has played and recorded with the Metropolitan Opera and the Orchestra of St. Luke's.

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LONE STAR FRENCHMAN

A Conversation with EMMANUEL VILLAUME

Since 2013, Strasbourg-born Emmanuel Villaume has been music director of The Dallas Opera, the host company for Opera Conference 2017, where attendees will see him take the podium for Bellini's *Norma* and a concert performance of Joby Talbot's 2015 *Everest*. He is also music director and chief conductor of the Prague Philharmonia, and he has appeared at San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera and the Metropolitan Opera, where this season he leads Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Here he talks to OPERA America President/CEO Marc A. Scorca about a career in conducting, American music, new works and his adopted city.

Marc A. Scorca: Strasbourg is a gorgeous city with an opera house where Wagner conducted. At what age did you become aware of that beautiful theater?

Emmanuel Villaume: Very early, actually. When I was seven or eight, I joined the Maîtrise de la Cathédrale, the children's chorus. We sang at the cathedral, but we were also the chorus for the opera. This had an extremely strong impact on me. I was a shy kid with a lot of emotions that I would not let out. I realized that those emotions were real and valid, and that when you express them onstage, it's something noble. So I understood very, very early that music could give meaning to your life and ultimately help you become a stronger, deeper, better person. In many ways it saved my life.

MAS: But when you went to the

Sorbonne, you studied literature and philosophy. You didn't yet think of music as a career?

EV: Although I had completed my studies at Strasbourg Conservatory, my parents wanted me to become an academic. I don't regret having studied literature and philosophy, but afterward I said to myself: "No, that's enough. I need to go back to what's really the most meaningful thing in my life, which is music." So I went back to Strasbourg and started working with the opera, assisting the general director and some of the stage directors, because at that point I thought I could be a director. But I realized that actually the musical part was the most interesting for me. I met with Spiros Argiris, who was the music director of Spoleto Italy and Spoleto USA when the two festivals were still

together, and he said: "Of course you could be a conductor. You have the musical background; you just have to learn how to beat time, and I can teach you that." So I started to work at the Festival of Two Worlds in Italy, and I learned conducting on the spot. I was assistant to Seiji Ozawa for many years, and I learned from him that what makes a conductor interesting is not only his technical abilities — which are a requirement, absolutely — but personality, the appetite for the intellectual, emotional, political universe around him. A conductor is living; that's what makes him interesting on the podium.

MAS: You came to the United States when you were about 25 years old. Was this always a goal?

EV: It was totally an accident. During my second or third year as an assistant at the Festival of Two Worlds, Spiros asked me to conduct part of a rehearsal for an open-air concert on the Piazza Duomo. This was my first time conducting a big orchestra, and I was like a vampire tasting blood for the first time. I had so much fun they had to push me off the podium. [Gian Carlo] Menotti, the founder and artistic director of the festival, said to Spiros: "I see something there. We have a *Nozze di Figaro* in Charleston next year, with a young unknown soprano, Renée Fleming, and you should give him a few performances." Spiros of course was very proud that the guy he had taken under his wing had been noted by Menotti, but he was still a little scared. He said, "Now you really have to work."

MAS: You've also worked a lot as an orchestral conductor, especially in Central Europe, where you're now music director of the Prague Philharmonia.

EV: I believe that it is

important to balance your career between symphonic and operatic. All the great conductors have done that: Mahler, Furtwängler, Bruno Walter, Abbado and Kleiber, both the father and the son. When you do a symphony performance, you need a thorough understanding of the intellectual structure of the piece and a great sense of the details and textures. When you're in an operatic situation, with so many variables, these are qualities you might not have time to care about — you just want to make sure the performance happens. Still, when a symphony-orchestra specialist tackles a great operatic work, you can sometimes hear something is missing: the sense of drama, the storytelling, the sense of developing a conversation with the stage and the audience, and the ability to shift gears when a curveball comes your way. So that balance between the dramatic flair of an opera conductor and the intellectual integrity of an orchestra conductor is fundamental.

MAS: How do you approach American music?

EV: I came to American music late in my life. I think the most important thing you need to tackle a repertoire is to understand the language well enough to get to the heart and soul of a piece. Last year I conducted *Show Boat* [at The Dallas Opera], my first musical. I had a blast with it. And at first some of the singers were saying, "How do you feel about that genre?" And I said, "I can read music and I can feel music." Obviously you need to have a certain affinity for the flavors and harmonies and that type of orchestration, but I have lived in the States for a long time now.

MAS: What is it like working on new music, compared to the masterpieces of the canon?

EV: There is nothing like working with a score that has never been recorded and is maybe pushing the envelope on what an orchestra can do. I have conducted many different kinds of contemporary music, from the most aggressive,

dissonant and deconstructed to the most harmonically consonant and sweet. Twelve-tone music can be totally absurd or amazing; you have some consonant music that is totally valid and some that is elevator music. In America, there is more a sense of the validity of music that has a little more consonance. I think we've moved away from demonizing anything that would be harmonic, and the United States has probably been more tolerant than Europe in that way.

MAS: Which brings us to the musical program of our conference in May, where you have *Everest* and [Douglas J. Cuomo's] *Arjuna's Dilemma*, along with *Norma*.

EV: I have done *Norma* with Washington National Opera and in Marseilles, and I think it's one of those amazing masterpieces of the Italian repertoire. You know, the Germans categorize operas as "conductor pieces" or "ensemble pieces," and *Norma* is one of the few conductor pieces in the Italian repertoire.

MAS: *Everest*, which had its

Jeffrey Denman and Kate Loprest in The Dallas Opera's 2016 *Show Boat*.



KAREN ALMOND, DALLAS OPERA



KAREN ALMOND, DALLAS OPERA

Everest's world premiere at The Dallas Opera.

world premiere at The Dallas Opera in 2015, was a real success. You and [general director] Keith Cerny believe in that work enough to bring it back to the conference for us.

EV: A lot of companies are so happy to do premieres, but most of those are also dernières: They are the first and the last. It's very important to give a second chance to some of those contemporary works. *Everest* was such a revelation for so many people that it deserved to be presented again. We have a strong commitment to commissions, as you know, in Dallas — in the calendar year 2015, we had three world premieres [*Everest*, Jake Heggie's *Great Scott* and Mark Adamo's *Becoming Santa Claus*]. This was a huge gamble, but it paid off tremendously. It energized the company; it energized our audiences; and it brought attention to The Dallas Opera and to the composers. The good thing about Dallas is that our audiences do not have any preconceptions. They are open to what we offer them, and then they like it or they don't like it. We had a very, very good rate of attendance for all three operas.

MAS: You are the music director at an opera company in a city that is completely American. How do you like your adopted city?

EV: Dallas has a personality that I connect to strongly. It's a place where people judge you for what you do, not what your pedigree is. There's a lot of community pride, which translates into support for the arts. From an architectural and urban point of view, it has developed a lot in the last decades. The arts district is amazing, where you have the Dallas Museum of Art, the Nasher Sculpture Center, the Symphony Center and our opera house, all within walking distance of a wonderful park. Our opera house itself clashes with the clichés people might

have about Dallas. It isn't "Texas-sized." By American standards, it's a small opera house, which makes for a close, warm connection between the audience and the performers.

MAS: I know Dallas Opera transmits some performances to AT&T Stadium. Have you ever attended?

EV: No — every time there's been one when I'm in Dallas, I'm the conductor! But these simulcasts have been very powerful, and very successful. The idea was to bring opera outside the opera house to the streets and the parks of the city. But there is nothing like a live performance, so ultimately what we want is for people to come to the opera house and have that unique experience. ●



KAREN ALMOND, DALLAS OPERA

Villaume and The Julliard Orchestra



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Someone Who Speaks Their Language: How a Nontraditional Partner Brought New Audiences to Minnesota Opera

This case study describes the Minnesota Opera's efforts to expand its audience by reaching a population segment where it suspected potential fans might reside: women ages 35 to 60. The opera company's work centered on making the most of an unlikely partnership with a local talk-radio host.



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Above: Susan Mickey's costume designs for Susanna and Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*.
Below: Sue Blane's designs for the King, Anna and Tuptim in *The King and I*.



LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

A PERFECT TEN

OPERA America's latest design exhibition showcases the careers of ten of opera's most outstanding talents. *TEN: A Season of Creative Women* presents the work of costume designers Sue Blane, Constance Hoffman, Susan Mickey, Jane Greenwood and Catherine Zuber; lighting designers Paule Constable and Jennifer Tipton; scenic and costume designer Vicki Mortimer; director Barbara Gaines; and

director/choreographer Susan Stroman. The work of all ten women was featured during the 2015–2016 season of Lyric Opera of Chicago, which organized the show and presented it at the Civic Opera House last October through May.

The exhibition — curated by Lyric Opera of Chicago's production design director, Scott Marr, and technical finance manager, Michael Schoening — brings

together photographs, production renderings, costumes and videos that illustrate the women's contributions to Lyric, as well as their other theatrical endeavors. *TEN* runs through February 2017 and is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on the seventh and eighth floors of the National Opera Center. ●

A BUON VIAGGIO FOR OA AMBASSADORS

From Aix-en-Provence to Glyndebourne, Venice to Berlin, OPERA America's Ambassador Travel program offers an entrée to some of the best opera beyond American shores. This summer, members of OPERA America's Ambassador Circle journeyed to the homeland of opera for a 10-day tour of Southern Italy organized in partnership with Act 1 Tours, a Business Member of OPERA America.

Performances of *Aida* and *Madama Butterfly* at Naples' glittering 18th-century Teatro di San Carlo, the world's oldest continuously active opera house, brought the group face-to-face with operatic history. By day, the Ambassadors toured the ancient Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, traveled along the Amalfi Coast, with visits to Ravello and Sorrento, and explored the untouched beauty of Naples's historic city center.

The group then headed east into Apulia to the 10th-century city of Martina Franca, home to the lesser-known Festival della Valle d'Itria. There, the opera lovers saw the first modern production of *Baccanali* a forgotten Baroque opera by the composer Agostino Steffani, and a playful production of *Così fan tutte* that featured a cast of talented young artists. Historic tours of Alberobello, Lecce and Bari offered meals of grilled octopus, fresh burrata, parmigiana di melanzane and other specialties of the region's extraordinary cuisine.

Ambassador Travel destinations for 2017 include New York, Dallas, Santa Fe and Spain. For more information, see page 29 or visit operaamerica.org/Travel.

The Ambassador Circle is a group of dedicated opera lovers, patrons, artists, administrators and trustees whose generous gifts to OPERA America provide the foundation for services to the opera field. Learn more by visiting operaamerica.org/Support. ●



Clockwise from top left: OPERA America Ambassadors tour Naples's Teatro di San Carlo; Pasta-making in Bari; Ambassadors at the opening night of Teatro di San Carlo's *Aida*; Warren and Melody Schubert and Marc A. Scorca on the Amalfi Coast; Rick Miners and Jeri Sedlar in Ravello.

A LEGACY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

The late singer and teacher Patricia Scimeca (1950–2013) devoted much of her life to nurturing the careers of young singers, and in 2013, when she initiated an endowment at OPERA America, she made it her legacy. With the leadership of her husband, Michael, and the generous contributions of many people over the past three years, the Patricia Scimeca Fund for Emerging Singers has become a fitting tribute to her vision.

The Fund supports OPERA America’s Feedback Auditions, a professional development program designed by Scimeca herself. These auditions give singers an opportunity to perform their audition arias in front of panel of industry professionals, who offer honest, constructive assessments of their talent, musicianship, presentation skills and repertoire selections. Four sessions of Feedback Auditions are scheduled for the 2016–2017 season.

This year, the Howard Gilman

Foundation, which also supports Feedback Auditions, stepped forward to underwrite OPERA America’s Career Blueprints for Singers, a three-day intensive workshop for young artists. The Career Blueprints program equips singers with key career-building tools: headshots, audio and video recordings, and websites, all at the highest professional levels. Participants also receive guidance from artist managers, established singers and opera company leaders. The generosity of the Gilman Foundation allowed OPERA America to offer significantly reduced registration fees to the 24 artists who participated in the program this September.

Information on Feedback Auditions and Career Blueprints for Singers may be found at operaamerica.org/ForArtists. Visit operaamerica.org/Support for a listing of contributors to the Patricia Scimeca Fund for Emerging Singers and to learn more about donating to the Fund. ●



AUDREY SACCONI

Makeup artist Caroline Baribeau prepares mezzo-soprano Kelly Clarke for a photoshoot as part of the 2016 Career Blueprints for Singers program.

NEW GROUPINGS FOR MEMBERS

OPERA America has realigned its categorization of its roughly 150 Professional Company Members (PCMs) across North America. Before fiscal year 2016–2017, PCMs were classified into four “Levels” — Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. Now, they are grouped into five “Budgets.” One motivation behind the new nomenclature, according to President/CEO Marc A. Scorca, has been to avoid any implication that the membership classifications have a qualitative component. “We’ve gotten rid of the word ‘level’ because we’re aware that

transcendent experiences can be found at companies of any size,” Scorca says.

Other than nomenclature, the chief change effected by the new system is the addition of a new category, Budget 5, covering companies that operate on less than \$250,000 per year. Previously, these PCMs had been grouped in Level 4 with companies budgeted at \$250,000 to \$1 million. “For the most part, companies with budgets below \$250,000 are one-person operations,” says Scorca. “Once a company is above \$250,000, second staff members come into play.

And by the time the company is at \$1 million, it usually has small departments. By making these distinctions, we think we can provide more focused and helpful service.”

Every year, OPERA America compiles the financial statistics of each budget group and publishes them in its Annual Field Report, providing boards and staff with a baseline against which to judge their companies’ fiscal health. The next Annual Field Report will appear in the next issue of *Opera America*. ●

Budget 1	\$15 million +	11 members
Budget 2	\$3 – 14.9 million	32 members
Budget 3	\$1 – 2.9 million	22 members
Budget 4	\$250,000 – \$999,000	46 members
Budget 5	<\$250,000	34 members

TOMORROW'S LEADERS

In late August, the 2016 class of OPERA America's Leadership Intensive program came together at the National Opera Center. Supported by American Express, the program identifies promising opera leaders and provides them with specialized coaching to help them advance their careers. This year, the Leadership Intensive hosted 14 professionals from the U.S.,

Canada and Europe who participated in a weeklong course designed to address strategic issues, build essential skills and foster strong professional connections. Participants have been invited to join Leadership Intensive alumni at Opera Conference 2017 for roundtable discussions and seminars. See page 17 to learn more about the program. ●



Leadership Intensive Class of 2016, standing (l-r): David Lomeli, Ashley Parks, Claire Padien-Havens, Sarah Squire, Patrick Mühlen-Schulte, Michelle Myers, Vincent Connor, Hannah Griffiths, Jennifer Rivera, Leah D. Barto (Director of Learning and Leadership, OPERA America), Chandra McKern, Michael Blais. Seated (l-r): Lydia Zodda, Colleen Maybin, Morgan Beckford.



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Clockwise from top left: (l-r) Lydia Zodda, Patrick Mühlen-Schulte and Vincent Connor; Leah D. Barto, Ashley Parks and Chandra McKern; David Lomeli and Sarah Squire; Hannah Griffiths and Colleen Maybin; Morgan Beckford.

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Photography by Ted Washington. 2016 Production of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

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PATRICIA K. JOHNSON

Nicholas Payne, director of Opera Europa, welcomes attendees at the organization's June conference in Amsterdam.

OA ON LOCATION: OPERA EUROPA CONFERENCE

Over the past year, OPERA America and its European sister organization, Opera Europa, have been examining ways to increase communications between its memberships and foster the cross-pollination of ideas. As part of this effort, OPERA America's director of marketing and communications, Patricia Kiernan Johnson, traveled to Amsterdam in June to attend Opera Europa's biannual conference, hosted by the Dutch National Opera and Ballet. Johnson spoke on a panel about communication strategies for youth and social projects that included Lauri Pokkinen, audience outreach and social responsibility manager at Finnish National Opera, and Christopher Millard, director of press and communications at the Royal Opera House in London.

Also in attendance at the conference were representatives from several OPERA America member companies, including Los Angeles Opera, Opera Memphis, Palm Beach Opera and Opera Philadelphia, as well as American composer

David T. Little, who spoke to attendees about engendering audiences for new work.

"While there are many criteria that distinguish American companies from their overseas counterparts — funding sources, administrative structures and aesthetic sensibilities, to name a few — it is often these very differences that have sparked lively discussions when we've put members of OPERA America and Opera Europa in the same room," says OPERA America President/CEO Marc A. Scorca. "Looking at foreign models of operation has allowed our members to take a step back, reexamine the status quo and think about ways in which they can adapt strategies from their European colleagues, and vice versa."

The trans-Atlantic dialogue will continue this May when OPERA America welcomes Opera Europa colleagues to Opera Conference 2017 in Dallas, taking place May 4 to 8. ●

CREATING *DER ROSENKAVALIER*: FROM CHEVALIER TO CAVALIER

By Michael Reynolds
Boydell Press

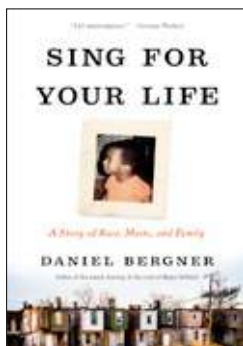


In 1907, the German diplomat and aesthete Harry Kessler saw the opérette *L'Ingénu libertine* in Paris and recommended it to his friend Hugo von Hofmannsthal. In this study,

Reynolds argues that the operetta was a primary source for the libretto of *Der Rosenkavalier*, and that Kessler was actively involved in the creation of that operatic masterpiece — a work that made a fortune for Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss, while leaving Kessler on the sidelines.

SING FOR YOUR LIFE: A STORY OF RACE, MUSIC AND FAMILY

By Daniel Bergner
Lee Boudreaux Books

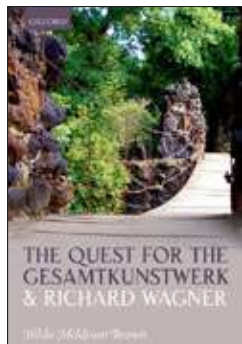


Sing for Your Life chronicles the journey of bass-baritone Ryan Speedo Green from a rough childhood in eastern Virginia — where, at age 12, he was placed in juvenile detention — to

success on the opera stage. The book shows how singing helped Green overcome volatile family relationships and childhood rage, and offers a consideration of the impact of race on his life and career. Green was a winner of the 2011 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and he has since completed the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program and become an ensemble member of the Vienna State Opera.

QUEST FOR THE GESAMTKUNSTWERK AND RICHARD WAGNER

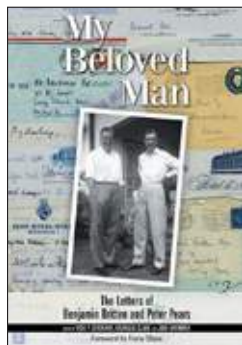
By Hilda Meldrum Brown
Oxford University Press



This book examines how the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (“total work of art”), once a key concept in Wagner studies, has become problematic. The author traces the development of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* through the 19th century, culminating in Wagner's theories and in his late music dramas, most notably the *Ring*. The book contrasts Wagner's own concept of the *Ring* as a fusion of dramatic text and music with the recent trend toward deconstruction in Wagnerian productions.

MY BELOVED MAN: THE LETTERS OF BENJAMIN BRITTEN AND PETER PEARS

Edited by Vicki P. Stroehrer, Nicholas Clark and Jude Brimmer
Boydell Press



The surviving pieces of correspondence between composer Benjamin Britten and his partner, Peter Pears, are here brought together and published for the first time, as

Pears intended. The letters — 365 written over 39 years — provide valuable details of the development of Britten's works, as well as insights into his relationship with Pears and their day-to-day life together. They also offer glimpses of cultural and artistic life in the 20th century, touching upon topics such as art collecting, critical assessments of music, the development of the Aldeburgh Festival and performance practice in early music.

MUSIC IN VIENNA: 1700, 1800, 1900

By David Wyn Jones
Boydell Press



This wide-ranging study focuses on the political and social role of music in Austria's capital at three discrete points in its history — 1700, 1800 and 1900 — in an effort

to distinguish the very different relationships between music and society in each. Populated by emperors, princes, performers, publishers, writers and composers, the volume juxtaposes institutional and commercial trends with representative individual works. The book looks at patronage, social function and the makeup of audiences, considering these matters within the wider context of political and cultural developments.

MAD LOVES: WOMEN AND MUSIC IN OFFENBACH'S *LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN*

By Heather Hadlock
Princeton University Press



Mad Loves offers an exploration of Jacques Offenbach's final masterpiece and proposes that *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* summed up not only the composer's career, but

also a century of Romantic culture, its dreamlike episodes expressing a collective unconscious. The author, a professor of musicology at Stanford, touches on topics ranging from the protagonist's self-reflexive style to parallels between 19th-century writings about theater and medical science. She also investigates how the 1870s' political climate influenced the composer's vision and the reception of his last work.

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MY FIRST OPERA

BY PETER SELLARS

RUTH WALZ



When I was a teenager, I bought my first opera record, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, conducted by Thomas Beecham. I'd get crazed listening to it in my dorm room at Andover. You could imagine the most amazing action. I'd get plunged into this tunnel of music and emotions — a full Sensurround experience. So I jumped at the chance to go with a group from school and see the Met on tour in Boston, doing *Aida*.

I was already primed to love opera. I was into all this immersive theater. Every summer from the time I was 10, I'd study with Margo Lovelace, who ran this famous puppet theater in Pittsburgh. They did a production for adults every year, like Cocteau's ballet *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel*, with music by Les Six. These shows would combine a script, music, action, painted scenery and puppets, influenced by the summer Margo spent in Japan studying Bunraku theater. And in high school I discovered Stravinsky and researched Diaghilev's productions, which I loved because they synchronized action and scenic elements. I was deeply into the idea of theater as a total work of art.

That's why it was a little strange to see the old-fashioned Met *Aida*. It was given at Hynes Auditorium, which was a truly dead space: a convention center built for boat shows, not opera. I was waiting for that wraparound thing, so emotionally overwhelming and sensuous, that opera can do, but it didn't happen.

The sets seemed oddly flat, and so did the performance. The thing that most caught my attention was in the last act, when they put the set up backwards. You could see "Act IV tomb" stenciled on the back of the canvas! That was the first visually interesting thing of the evening — very Jasper Johns. Finally, a touch of the avant-garde!

The performance starred Richard Tucker and Robert Merrill. To see Tucker in Egyptian-warrior regalia was truly hilarious. He stood like a truck driver. When he opened his mouth, the sound was loud and really, really strong — he sounded like a truck driver! It was only later that I realized these guys were great American working-class heroes. They sang with an incredible amount of courage and commitment. They gave the sense that opera was for strong, enduring, heroic people who could win World War II and put the world to right and have the best country on earth.

I was already primed to love opera ... I was deeply into the idea of theater as a total work of art.

My real introduction to opera came from Sarah Caldwell, who was such a force in Boston at this time. The repertoire she offered was phenomenal: *Macbeth* with Shirley Verrett, *Semiramide* with Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne, *Benvenuto Cellini* with Jon Vickers, the American premieres of *Moses und Aron* and *Die Soldaten*. Opera was such an adventure for Sarah. Who'd have thought we'd ever get a chance to see *Ruslan and Lyudmila*? Nobody else was doing these things, but she was saying, "This is basic repertory." She expanded your idea of what the art form could be.

I didn't choose to direct opera for the opera world itself, but it was always this great way to make "theater-plus." And I deeply love music. I spent five

months at Andover staging Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*. All the theater I did in high school and college had music in it. When we did *Three Sisters*, at Harvard, we had a great pianist, Roy Kogan, playing Chopin throughout. It made music an equal partner.

I started going to Denver in the summer, working with a bunch of friends at the Elitch Theatre, the oldest and largest summer theater in America. In our spare time, we'd put on puppet shows and magic shows for children downtown in Larimer Square, but then we decided to do something more ambitious. My friend David Reiffel suggested Wagner's *Ring*, and we got into a deep argument. I was obeying adolescent logic: Since I loved Stravinsky, I had to hate Wagner. But David won out. I gained new respect for Wagner when I tried to cut each opera down to one hour — you realize there isn't really any fat there. We staged our puppet *Ring* in a square outside the world's biggest Woolworth's store and hung our Rainbow Bridge out the window of a fourth-floor men's room in an adjacent office building. Wagner people are fanatics, of course, and they came to Denver from all over to see it.

When we went back to Harvard, we did the *Ring* cycle indoors. Richard Dyer from *The Boston Globe* came and saw it and so did fantastic singers from the Boston scene, like Susan Larson and Jeff Gall. Then I was hired to work with Emmanuel Music, which was run by the wonderful Craig Smith. They'd do a different Bach cantata every weekend, along with Handel oratorios, the complete lieder of Schumann and Schubert, and the songs of Debussy. And that's when I began to learn what music really is: this incredible force that brings people together, takes them into a metaphysical sense of themselves and lets them form a community. ●

Peter Sellars has gained international renown for his groundbreaking and transformative interpretations of artistic masterpieces and for collaborative projects with an extraordinary range of creative artists. He has staged operas at the Dutch National Opera, English National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opéra national de Paris, Salzburg Festival and San Francisco Opera, among others.

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