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# OPERA AMERICA

**SPRING 2016**

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## ABOUT THE COVER

Canada's operatic legacy is portrayed in this collage by artist Nazario Graziano, who is represented by Montreal- and Paris-based Colagene. Graziano's editorial clients include *Le Monde*, *Philosophie* and *Response*. Pictured in the collage are (clockwise, from top left): conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin (photo: Jessica Griffin); soprano Emma Albani; Montréal's Biopshere, built for Expo 67; tenor Jon Vickers (photo: Louis Mélançon/Metropolitan Opera Archives); and director Robert Lepage's double-bill production of Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol* and *Renard*, first seen in 2009 at Canadian Opera Company (photo: Louise Leblanc).

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

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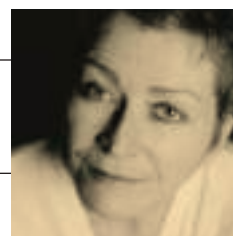
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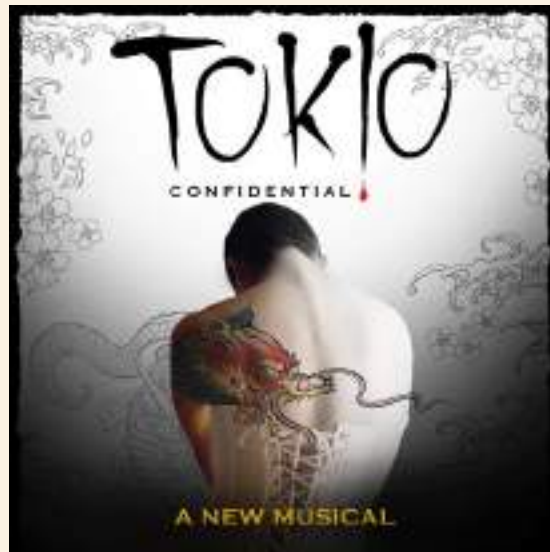
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## FROM THE HEARTLAND



Like any association leader, I am pleased when we break attendance records at our convenings, as we did throughout this year's season of Forums. More people participated in the Education, Marketing/PR and New Works Forums than ever before. Feedback from these meetings revealed that simple numbers weren't the only indicator of success. The quality of content at each meeting was exceptional, including the first-ever presentation of our New Opera Showcase with orchestra, which was the centerpiece of the New Works Forum. Presented at Trinity Church Wall Street in collaboration with NOVUS NY, the performance featured works by composers Sheila Silver, Hannah Lash, Bright Sheng and Stewart Copeland. You can enjoy these performances on OPERA America's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/OPERAAmerica](https://youtube.com/OPERAAmerica).

But visiting OPERA America member companies is the most rewarding aspect of my work, as I was reminded in January during a road trip that brought me to four companies across a 1,000-mile swath of the Midwest. At Opera Omaha I helped present a new strategic plan, which extends through the company's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2018. At Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre I met with company leaders who are building administrative capacity to support increased programming in the company's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season. Along the way I met with Des Moines Metro Opera staff to discuss elements of a capital campaign. My visit to Des Moines unintentionally coincided with the lead-up to the Iowa caucuses, so that I was disappointed when I learned the CNN cameras weren't there to cover the opera company's collaboration with the Des Moines Arts Center on a staged multimedia production of *Winterreise*. Onward I journeyed through southern Illinois and Indiana to Louisville, where members of the Kentucky Opera board were ready to discuss the dynamics of a search to replace David Roth after his untimely passing last year.

It was remarkable to drive across gently rolling landscapes, past hundreds of windmills that generate significant amounts of electricity, to arrive in cities that are equally powered by live performances of opera, either through resident companies or through the touring and education programs of larger organizations. In each town, opera is sustained by dedicated and generous board members whose lives revolve, at least in part, around their opera company. I was welcomed at dinners and receptions, and witnessed the joy and dedication these volunteers experience by contributing to the vibrancy of their communities through the medium of opera.

This stirring sense of personal investment is unique to the North American arts model and was on full display during the National Trustee Forum last month, which once again achieved record attendance. We were honored throughout the Trustee Forum and our winter board of directors meeting by the attendance of Philippe Agid, the Paris-based former deputy chief executive of the Opéra national de Paris and author of several books, including *The Management of Opera*, a comparative analysis of leading opera companies around the world. In an impromptu interview, Philippe commented on the unique volunteer spirit that drives North American opera companies, drawing a compelling distinction: France and other European countries have culture ministers, while in the United States, every citizen is his or her own culture minister, deciding what organizations to support and how to support them. He credited our unique system with the cultural vitality across the U.S. and Canada.

*Opera Conference 2016: Global Strategies/Local Actions*, to be held May 18 to 21 in Montréal, will provide another opportunity to learn from colleagues about the implications of these fundamental principles. The success of every opera company depends on the local interpretation and implementation of global ideas about the arts and their relationship to community life. We are delighted to examine these strategies and their implications in beautiful Montréal, where our colleagues at Opéra de Montréal are preparing an international welcome. I look forward to seeing you there.

Yet another OPERA America convening, albeit virtual, is this magazine, which, in print and on the web, serves as a vehicle for sharing information and innovative ideas among our members. With this issue we say farewell to *Opera America Magazine's* editor, Matthew Sigman, who for three years has raised our editorial standards, commissioned the finest opera journalists and brought his kinetic energy to the spirited team that produces this quarterly. Matthew is leaving us to write full time for business and the arts, and he promises to make time for us, so you haven't seen the last of his byline. Our new editor, Fred Cohn, is a superb writer and has been a passionate observer of the opera scene for decades. Now it's his turn to noodge me to deliver this letter on time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc A. Scorca".

Marc A. Scorca  
President/CEO

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JEFF REEDER

Top: Composer Sheila Silver (in red jacket) takes a bow following a performance of selections from her latest work, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, at OPERA America's New Opera Showcase, which took place January 19 at Trinity Wall Street in Manhattan. Also pictured (l-r): mezzo-soprano Aleksandra Romano, soprano Vira Slywotzky, tenor Thor Arbjornsson, soprano Lucy Fitz Gibbon and conductor Sara Jobin. Bottom: Jessica Gethin, who, along with fellow conductors Jennifer Condon, Natalie Murray Beale, Stephanie Rhodes, Anna Skryleva and Lidiya Yankovskaya, was chosen for the inaugural class of the Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors at The Dallas Opera.

## CLOSING THE GENDER GAP

As vocal artists, women have always captured center stage, but out of the spotlight leading roles for women in opera have been limited. As composers, conductors and managers, their presence has been out of sync with that of their male counterparts. But a convergence of initiatives on behalf of women in opera is now generating what composer Laura Kaminsky calls a “watershed” moment. “There is increasing support for talented, hardworking women across all aspects of the field,” she says.

Among these initiatives are the Opera Grants for Female Composers, launched in 2014 by OPERA America with the support of The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation; The Dallas Opera's Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors, which recently received a \$500,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and OPERA America's Women's Opera Network, a grassroots initiative developed by leaders in the field to cultivate

opportunities for women as artistic and general directors.

“The field has long been aware of the gender gap within the broader opera community,” says OPERA America President/CEO Marc A. Scorca. “The challenge has been finding sustainable solutions for long-term change, and we are beginning to see that now. We are delighted to have found the means and the partners to take action.”

Data derived from OPERA America research has been fundamental for quantifying disparities and setting goals for each of these initiatives. When the Opera Grants for Female Composers program was established, it was estimated that of the \$13 million awarded by OPERA America over 25 years in support of new American operas, fewer than five percent of those grants had been awarded to women. To remediate the imbalance, the Toulmin-funded program supports a dual strategy: Discovery Grants of up to \$15,000 made directly to female



KAREN ALMOND, DALLAS OPERA

composers to develop new works, and Commissioning Grants of up to \$50,000 awarded to professional opera companies to support commissions of works by women. Fifteen Discovery Grants and six Commissioning Grants have been awarded so far. Additional granting cycles are in progress.

Kaminsky herself was the recipient of a Discovery Grant in 2014 in support of *As One*, a work developed by **AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS** that has since

*Continued on page 42*

**“There is increasing support for talented, hardworking women across all aspects of the field.”**

Laura Kaminsky

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## LINKING THE PAST TO THE PRESENT



FORT WORTH OPERA

A panel discussion on civil rights at The Potter's House church in Dallas, part of Fort Worth Opera's six-month discussion series leading up to the premiere of *JFK* by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek. Pictured here (l-r): Matt Houston, board chairman, Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce; Devoyd "Dee" Jennings, president, Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce; James Riddlesperger, professor of political science, Texas Christian University; Ernie McMillan, human rights activist; and Bob Ray Sanders, columnist, Fort Worth's *Star-Telegram*.

On the eve of the assassination of John F. Kennedy in Dallas, the president and his wife, Jacqueline, spent their final night together in downtown Fort Worth's historic Hotel Texas. With dreamlike sequences recalling moments from the couple's life together, composer David T. Little and librettist Royce Vavrek endeavor to recreate the spirit of that night with the opera *JFK*. A co-commission of **FORT WORTH OPERA** and **AMERICAN LYRIC THEATER**, the opera will have its premiere on April 23 in Fort Worth.

Because of its potent connection to the Dallas-Fort Worth area, the opera inspired Fort Worth Opera to create its most ambitious community engagement project to date: *Five Decades of Progress*, a six-month-long discussion series exploring key issues from Kennedy's presidency and the evolution of these topics over the past half-century. The series began last October and continued through the end of March.

FWO wanted *Five Decades of Progress* to be rooted in President Kennedy's story but pertinent to "the now," says the company's director of marketing and communications, Holland Sanders, who spearheaded the initiative with support from her colleagues Christina Allen, marketing and communications

manager, and Hannah Guinn, director of education. Contemporary events outside of Dallas-Fort Worth, such as the 2014 police shooting death of Michael Brown in Missouri, led to a panel discussion on civil rights in connection with *JFK*. The company also chose four other key issues from Kennedy's presidency — media, space exploration, U.S.-Cuba relations and the arts — as topics for additional discussions. Panels of experts and community leaders were assembled to speak on each topic, and FWO identified appropriate partner organizations to host the events.

While FWO crafted the series for contemporary resonance, it also sought to contextualize the Kennedy presidency. At least one expert historian was chosen for each panel. Jim Riddlesperger, a political science professor at Texas Christian University who served on two of the panels, believes the conversations helped bring Kennedy's era to life in a "vivid, three-dimensional way" for younger audiences. "All of us have memories, but increasingly you have to be old to remember John F. Kennedy," he says. "For many potential opera fans, Kennedy is no more than a picture they have in their minds."

While the discussions have been branded as FWO events, the company felt it was important to avoid heavy-handed

tie-ins to the mainstage production during the events themselves. "We do say, 'These conversations were brought to you by Fort Worth Opera,'" says Sanders, "But we are bringing together the experts and stepping away and letting the conversations happen in a natural way, among people who are affected by these issues." Creating authentic dialogues required months of research, as well as directly contacting relevant communities that could help shape the discussions. Fort Worth's Black Chamber of Commerce advised on key influencers who were included in the civil rights panel, while NASA provided guidance on the space exploration discussion.

By taking these conversations out of the opera house, as well as outside the realm of typical "educational" opera talks, FWO aims to reach individuals previously unknown to the company. The events have taken place at venues across the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, including the University of Texas at Arlington, The Sixth Floor Museum in Dallas, the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth and The Potter's House church in Dallas.

Sanders reports that the talks have each attracted between 75 and 100 people and that audiences have been composed primarily of people who are interested in the discussion topics, many of whom have never heard of Fort Worth Opera. Opera buffs and longtime FWO fans have been in the minority. Though all of the events have been free, the company has tracked registration and has followed up with discounted *JFK* ticket offers via e-mail, perhaps providing an entry point for those new to opera.

The goal of the project was not just to demonstrate the relevancy of *JFK* to potential North Texas audiences, and to possibly sell tickets, but to establish FWO as a valued presence within the region. "We've realized our responsibility as an opera company does not begin and end with performances," says Sanders. "We no longer just want to sell tickets; we want to be woven into the community. If people show up and realize that the opera cares and listens to the community, and that's as far as the relationship goes, we as a staff are okay with that. As our community makes choices, they will feel that we are integral to the vibrancy of our city." ●

— Nicholas Wise



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# JFK

A Grand Opera

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David T. Little

LIBRETTO BY  
Royce Vavrek

COMMISSIONED BY  
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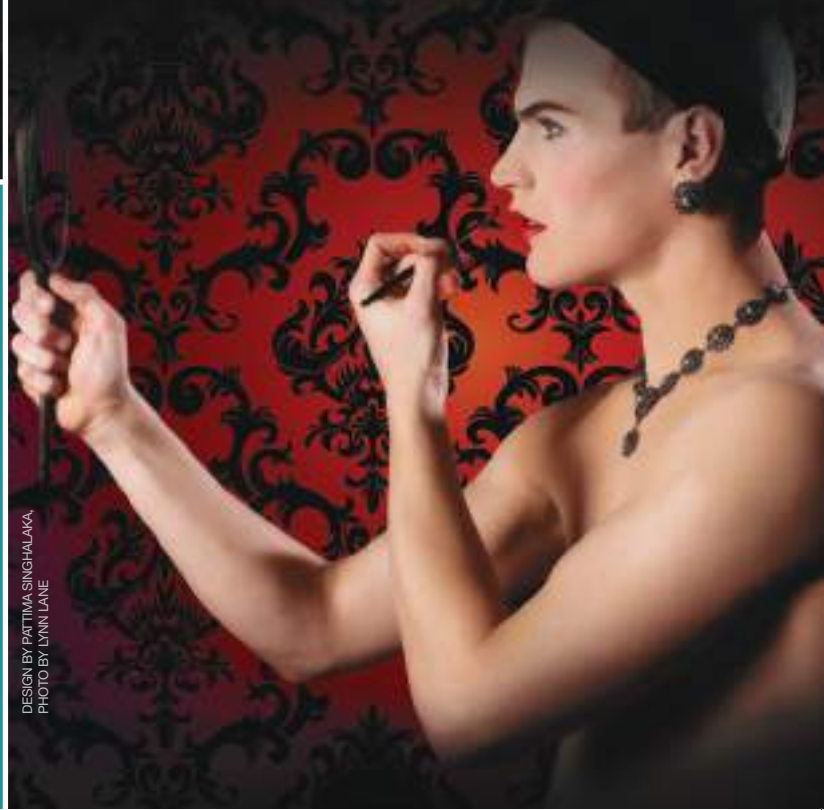
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- James MacMillan: *Inés de Castro*
- Mark-Anthony Turnage: *Anna Nicole*

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# PEOPLE

**Daphne Alexander** has joined The Dallas Opera as chief financial officer.

Los Angeles Opera has appointed composer and conductor **Matthew Aucoin** as its first artist in residence

**Fred Cohn**, whose articles and reviews have appeared in *Opera News*, *Musical America*, *Chamber Music* and other publications, has been appointed the editor of *Opera America Magazine*.

Michigan Opera Theatre founder and artistic director



MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

**David DiChiera** will retire in July 2017 after 46 years with the company. He will

become artistic director emeritus and serve as an adviser for Michigan Opera Theatre Studio, the company's recently established resident-artist program.

Vancouver Opera's new general director is **Kim Gaynor**,

succeeding **James W. Wright**, who retires at the end of this season. Gaynor has been managing director of



the Verbier Festival for the past 10 years. She previously served as managing director of Opéra de Montréal.

Skylight Music Theatre has appointed **DJ Haugen** as director of production and facilities.

Opera Saratoga welcomed **Deborah Lee** as director of development.

Houston Grand Opera has extended the contract of Managing Director **Perry Leech** through 2021.

**Fabio Luisi** will leave his post as principal conductor of the Metropolitan Opera in the 2016–2017 season to become music director designate of Florence's Opera di Firenze.

**Paul Meechem**, currently president and CEO of the

Baltimore Symphony, has been named to the equivalent position at Utah Symphony | Utah Opera, effective July 1.

San Francisco Conservatory of Music has appointed mezzo-soprano **Susanne Mentzer** to its voice faculty.

North Carolina Opera has announced that Artistic Director **Timothy Myers'** contract has been extended through the 2017–2018 season. The company has also hired as its new director of development **Ashley Parks**, previously of the Metropolitan Opera.

**Kostis Protopapas** will leave his position as Tulsa Opera's artistic director at the end of the 2015–2016 season. He will continue to serve as artistic director of Opera Santa Barbara.

San Francisco Opera has selected **Barbara C. Rominski** to be its first director of archives.

**Mark Saville** has left his post as director of

development at Arizona Opera to serve in the same capacity at Fort Worth Opera.

Michigan Opera Theatre has hired **Andrea Scobie** to head its education and community programs.



KEITARO HARADA

Minnesota Opera has selected **Ryan Taylor** as its new president and general

director, effective May 1. Taylor currently serves as general director of Arizona Opera.

**Greg Weber**, who served as managing director of Tulsa Opera in the 2014–2015 season, has returned to company in the newly created role of general director and CEO.

OPERA America has welcomed **Noah Stern Weber**, formerly associate producer at Beth Morrison Projects, as its new artistic services manager. ●

# KUDOS

The American Academy of Arts and Letters has announced that librettist and lyricist **Michael Korie**



CHESTER HIGGINS, JR.

will receive the 2016 Marc Blitzstein Award for Musical Theater at its annual award ceremony in May. This award of \$10,000 is given to a composer, lyricist or librettist to encourage the creation of opera and music-theater works of merit.

The Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam has named the finalists for its 2018 Domenic J. Pellicciotti Opera Composition Prize, which promotes operas that explore themes of tolerance, inclusion or the celebration of diversity. The works are

*Albert Nobbs* by **Patrick Soluri** and **Deborah Brevoort**, *Mayo* by **Tom Cipullo**, *The Reef* by **Anthony Davis** and **Joan Ross Sorkin**, and *Uncovered* by **Lori Laitman**. Each finalist will have a 20-minute excerpt workshopped in September. One will be awarded a \$25,000 commission and a production by the Crane Opera Ensemble and Orchestra.

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis has received a gift of \$750,000 from longtime board member Patricia G. Hecker to establish a new endowment fund, the Stephen H. Lord Fund for Music, which will underwrite salaries for key music staff. This fund honors conductor **Stephen Lord**, who will become music director emeritus at the end of the 2017 season, after leading

productions at OTSL for more than 30 years.

Soprano **Sydney Mancasola** has won the 2016 Mabel Dorn Reeder Foundation Prize presented by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. The \$10,000 prize recognizes extraordinary potential in emerging artists and provides support for the recipient's continued artistic and professional development.

Houston Grand Opera has announced the winners of the 28<sup>th</sup> annual Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers: The first-place prize of \$10,000 was awarded to soprano **Madison Leonard**, the second-place prize of \$5,000 went to mezzo-soprano **Zoie Reams**, and the third-place prize of \$3,000 was won by soprano **Alexandra Razskazoff**.

The 45<sup>th</sup> annual George London Foundation Awards Competition honored 15 American and Canadian singers. Prizes of \$10,000 each were awarded to soprano **Antonina Chehovska**, tenor **A.J. Glueckert**, baritone **Steven LaBrie**, soprano **Kirsten MacKinnon**, baritone **David Pershall** and soprano **Claudia Rosenthal**. Encouragement Awards of \$1,000 each went to baritones **Justin Austin** and **Jared Bybee**, mezzo-sopranos **Emily D'Angelo** and **Cecelia Hall**, tenor **John Matthew Myers**, soprano **Jacqueline Piccolino**, bass **Colin Ramsey**, bass-baritone **Michael Sumuel**, and baritone **John Viscardi**. The winners were selected from a pool of 85 singers who competed over the course of three days. ●

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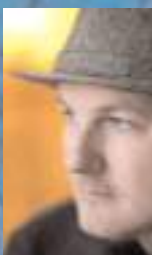
David Lang  
**anatomy theater**  
Libretto with  
Matt Dion



LA Opera  
June '16

photo by Peter Serling

Thomas Morse  
**Frau Schindler**  
Libretto by  
Kenneth Cazan



Staatstheater  
am Gärtnerplatz  
March '17

Kaija Saariaho  
**Only the Sound Remains**  
Japanese  
Noh dramas  
Dutch National  
Opera  
March '16

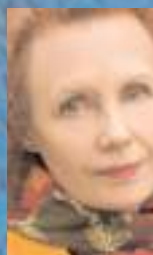


photo by Priska Kettlerer Luzern

Avner Dorman  
**Wahnfried**  
Libretto by  
Lutz Hübner



Badisches  
Staatstheater  
Karlsruhe  
January '17

Missy Mazzoli  
**Breaking the Waves**  
Libretto by  
Royce Vavrek



Opera  
Philadelphia  
September '16

photo by Marylene May

Bright Sheng  
**Dream of the Red Chamber**  
Libretto with  
David Henry  
Hwang



San Francisco  
Opera  
September '16

photo by Walt Liu

Rolf Wallin  
**Elysium**  
Libretto by  
Mark Ravenhill



Den Norske  
Opera  
March '16

photo by Walt Liu

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# IN MEMORIAM

ALAN STOKER/THE SANTA FE OPERA



AGMA



JONATHAN TICHER/METROPOLITAN OPERA



**Robert Baustian**, longtime conductor of The Santa Fe Opera, died on February 18 at age 94. Baustian began his career in Europe in 1950, serving as conductor of the Hessian State Opera from 1955 to 1957. He joined The Santa Fe Opera for its inaugural season in 1957 and went on to lead 176 performances of 23 operas during 23 seasons with the company. He was particularly associated with the operas of Mozart, though he conducted a wide repertoire, including the works of Debussy, Janáček, de Falla, Schoenberg, Poulenc and Stravinsky.

**Alan S. Gordon**, executive director of the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA), died on January 1 at age 70. As the union's leader, Gordon represented singers, dancers and production staff at major companies throughout the country. After assuming the helm of AGMA in 2000, Gordon helped to stabilize the organization's financial position and bolster its membership. "Mr. Gordon was a strong and dedicated visionary — fearless and unrelenting in protecting the rights of union members," AGMA commented in an official statement.

**Robert Tuggle**, archivist of the Metropolitan Opera for the past 34 years, died on January 24 at age 83. Before becoming the Met's archivist, Tuggle worked in the education department of the Metropolitan Opera Guild for more than two decades, beginning in 1957 at age 24 and eventually becoming director of the department. He studied musicology at Princeton, where he wrote a thesis on the early operas of Verdi. As the Met's archivist, Tuggle supervised a meticulously curated collection of rare artifacts and documents

covering the company's entire history. He also spearheaded an online database providing detailed information on every performance in the company's 133-year history. Tuggle advocated for the database to be available free of charge, and since launching in 2005, it has become an invaluable resource for opera buffs and researchers alike. Tuggle is the author of the 1983 volume *The Golden Age of Opera*, covering the careers of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century opera stars like Caruso and Ponselle. At the time of his death, he was working on a biography of Kirsten Flagstad. ●

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Marc A. Scorca and Frayda B. Lindemann at the opening of the National Opera Center in 2012. Photo by Ken Howard.

# A CONVERSATION WITH **FRAYDA B. LINDEMANN**

As her four-year tenure as board chairman of OPERA America comes to a close, **FRAYDA B. LINDEMANN** talks with OPERA America President/CEO **MARC A. SCORCA** about changes and challenges to the field. The vice president of the Metropolitan Opera, and a managing director of its board since 1991, she is the longtime sponsor of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. She received her doctorate in musicology from Columbia University in 1978 and was an associate professor in the music department at Hunter College for 12 years. She has also served on the boards of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and Young Concert Artists.

**MAS:** As a board member and chairman of OPERA America, you've observed growth and change in our organization and in the field. After all these years, how has OPERA America changed you?

**FBL:** I've spent my entire life in music: playing the piano, studying theory,

counterpoint and solfège. But my primary exposure to opera was at the Met. There was a little bit of City Opera, maybe BAM now and then, and visits to Covent Garden or Paris or Glyndebourne. But basically, since I was a teenager, it was the Met. It wasn't until I came on the board of OPERA America

that I was exposed to the breadth of companies in our country. I went to an annual conference and I was absolutely mystified and amazed to meet people who ran companies with one or two employees. And the very definition of opera changed for me.

# THE GERDA LISSNER FOUNDATION

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## IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE LIEDERKRANZ FOUNDATION

The Gerda Lissner Foundation was created to provide young opera singers with the financial support they need to pursue their craft and excel in the world of opera. Winners are judged by a panel comprised of prestigious professionals in the music world.

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A total of \$200,000 will be awarded.

The competition is divided into two parts:

THE GENERAL DIVISION (Open to singers ages 21-35)  
THE WAGNERIAN DIVISION (Open to singers ages 30-45)  
March 28 through April 2, 2016

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### LIEDER/SONG COMPETITION 2016

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JEFF REEDER

Frayda B. Lindemann with members of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at OPERA America's 2014 National Opera Trustee Recognition Awards Dinner. Pictured (l-r): soprano Hyesang Park, pianist/coach Lachlan Glen, Lindemann and baritone Alexey Lavrov.

**MAS:** It's remarkable to see the level of dedication at our smaller member companies.

**FBL:** It's a constant struggle for them. I really enjoy meeting them, more so at times than the leaders of the larger companies with whom one might presume I have a greater shared experience. The resilience of these small companies is terrific. And if one closes down, another opens up!

**MAS:** In many ways, these smaller companies act as incubators for the field. They give directors, designers, composers and singers a chance to try out their work. Of course, the Young Artist Program at the Met, which you fund, is also an incubator.

**FBL:** Actually, a program like the one that I sponsor at the Met doesn't allow for experimentation. It's very specific and focused. They're careful about when and where they allow singers to perform. They have to be trained in whatever they're doing at the Met. But with these smaller companies, I never fail to be amazed at how imaginative they are about what they do.

**MAS:** During your tenure at OPERA America, we've launched several new programs, among them the Opera Grants for Female Composers. We're deeply gratified by the number of women who've applied for funding, and that the program itself has encouraged more women to write for the genre. I don't think of you as a feminist, but I imagine

**"It wasn't until I came on the board of OPERA America that I was exposed to the breadth of companies in our country. The very definition of opera changed for me."**

you must be pleased by the emergence of strong women, whether on the podium or as composers or general managers.

**FBL:** I'm pleased on many different levels. On the Met's board we have the most fabulous women in major positions, and

they're making a huge contribution. In the field of conducting there is still a way to go, but The Dallas Opera has a new program for women. It certainly was advantageous when the Toulmin Foundation came forward with funding for women composers and OPERA America was chosen to administer the awards. And I was at that wonderful session at the annual conference last year in Washington when women lit up the room with ideas for helping other women move up in opera. It's a perfect moment for something very good to happen for women everywhere. Luck has something to do with it, but we're also doing a good job at it.

**MAS:** In our National Opera Trustee Recognition Program, women are in a clear majority in terms of dynamic, generous volunteer leadership.

**FBL:** I must tell you honestly that 10 years ago when you asked me to head up the Trustee Recognition Program, I was skeptical. Why would anyone on the board of an opera company want to come to New York to get an honor like that? And I was proven wrong. Trustees really appreciate the recognition, and it turned out to be a hugely successful program for opera companies and OPERA America.

**MAS:** In your own backyard at the Metropolitan Opera there's you, Ann Ziff, Judith-Ann Corrente, Betsy Cohen, Jeanette Neubauer. Women play an enormous role as volunteer leaders at the Met.



JEFF REEDER

Frayda B. Lindemann with Marc A. Scorca (l) and The Santa Fe Opera General Director Charles MacKay (r) at the 2015 dedication of the National Opera Center's Marc A. Scorca Hall, which honored Scorca's 25 years as president/CEO of OPERA America.

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**FBL:** And on the board of OPERA America, too: Francesca Zambello, Susan Morris, Carol Henry, Barbara Leirvik and Emilie Corey, to name just a few. I've been delighted to have these women involved on the board, and they are very productive.

**MAS:** In the course of your tenure, we opened the National Opera Center. Was this another idea about which you were skeptical?

**FBL:** Actually, I never thought, "What are they trying to do?" I always thought, "What a clever idea." And it turned out to be better than clever. It's not only a wonderful place for people to have auditions, rehearsals and meetings and gatherings; it's become a symbolic anchor for the field. It gives people a comfort zone to gather, to meet their friends and their colleagues.

**MAS:** You identify as a musicologist and your specialty is Baroque music. You were probably introduced to opera through the traditional 19<sup>th</sup>-century repertoire. How do you view the importance of new work in the repertoire?

**FBL:** I continue to be amazed at the number of new works being produced, especially in the United States. New works are, of course, essential. We can't keep doing the same old classical works. We tire of them. And too often the productions are not appropriate or just plain boring. And "boring" is a very bad word in the opera world. New works stimulate opera lovers and operagoers because they provoke conversation. Now, truthfully, they're often awful and don't get produced more than once. But positively or negatively, they stimulate the genre.

**MAS:** Among our achievements during your tenure have been several legislative victories in arts education, tax policies and visas for artists. Have you been surprised to realize how many legislative issues we juggle?

**FBL:** It is a lot of work. In the last 20 years, how many studies have been done to support the value of music and art to young students? Their academic performance in all areas — math, English — improves as a result. It has taken a long time, but I think it's affected the legislative process. As for the tax advantages of philanthropy, they remain essential for all donors, and people must understand



Peter Gelb, general manager of the Metropolitan Opera, with Frayda B. Lindemann.

that our whole nonprofit structure in the United States — not just in the performing arts, but hospitals, universities, churches — depends on them.

**MAS:** You yourself have worked the halls of Washington. You learned that a comfortable pair of shoes is part of being a lobbyist! Were you surprised at how accessible the offices were and that you actually could participate in the legislative process?

***"The Opera Center has become a symbolic anchor for the field. It gives people a comfort zone to gather, to meet their friends and their colleagues."***

**FBL:** Frankly, I wasn't so sure we could actually make a difference because so many of the people we spoke with on Capitol Hill were so young! But certainly it's worth the effort, even if those marble edifices and hallways are an endless maze. Fortunately, I had Anthony Freud of Chicago and Christopher Hahn of Pittsburgh to keep me from getting lost.

**MAS:** When you tell your children that you're going off to an OPERA America meeting, do they understand what it is you do? Do they appreciate what you've accomplished?

**FBL:** They do, because they've always known me as a musician, and I believe that it's given them a respect not just for their mother, but for accomplishment

in general. My children are quite accomplished, and I think it's a matter of the values that are transmitted. They are transmitted without lecturing; they're transmitted by what you do and how you live your life. My granddaughter Charlotte called me up and said, "Grandma, Grandma! I want to go see *Klinghoffer!*" She had heard about it and the controversy, and we went together. She said, "I'm going to look this one up because it's really interesting." That's the way it works.

**MAS:** You've also demonstrated to your children and grandchildren that volunteering is a lifelong occupation, that it never stops once you've committed your life to it.

**FBL:** "Committed" is the word. Children learn that a commitment means a commitment, and there are no excuses. Everything else can fit around that.

**MAS:** Are there any particularly fond remembrances — moments, people, places — that come to mind?

**FBL:** I loved traveling to the big cities for board meetings and conferences — Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver. Milwaukee was a revelation! Such a beautiful city, with so many nice people and so much opera going on. But what I enjoyed most was simply being in the middle of all of the opera and activity, knowing that people respected my opinion and wanted me there. It makes you feel good. ●



# NORTHERN VOICES: A LOOK AT CANADA'S OPERATIC LEGACY

Over four centuries, Canada has fused its French and English heritage to create a unique continuum of opera. **PIERRE VACHON** explores the nation's ever-evolving art form. In recognition of *Opera Conference 2016*, to take place May 18 to 21 in Montreal, we present this article in both English and French.

Translation by Henry Gauthier.

**T**wo years before the French navigator Samuel de Champlain officially founded Quebec City, the seeds of opera were planted on Canadian soil. On November 14, 1606, *Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France*, a play set to music by Marc Lescarbot, was presented at the Port-Royal d'Acadie in Nova Scotia. Four centuries later, opera continues to stake


out new ground in Canada's cultural life.

Opera evolved in Quebec and other Canadian provinces in fits and starts throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Concerts, including opera excerpts, were performed, and as more French and English immigrants arrived, they brought works by famous French composers such as Jean-Baptiste Lully and popular English classics such as Charles Dibdin's

comic opera *The Padlock*. Ensembles of singers and musicians were formed to present musical soirées.

Despite periods of economic and political instability — and, at times, the objections of clergy who questioned the morality of the opera repertoire — the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the continuing importation of notable works and singers. Foreign artists took advantage

## IMPORTANT MOMENTS IN CANADIAN OPERA




**1790** The first Canadian opera, *Colas et Colinette* by Joseph Quesnel, is performed in Montreal.

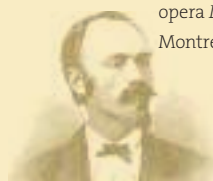
**1825** Franks' Assembly Room in Toronto hosts performances of two comic operas: George Colman's *The Mountaineers* and Stephen Storace's *No Song, No Supper*.

**1847** Soprano Emma Albani is born as Marie-Louise-Emma-Cécile Lajeunesse in Chambly, near Montreal.

**1878** Calixa Lavallée (below) conducts François-Adrien Boieldieu's comic opera *La Dame blanche* in Montreal and Quebec City.



**1894** The Société philharmonique de Montréal performs concert versions of the opera *Le Vaisseau fantôme* by Pierre-Louis Dietsch.





Opposite: Opéra de Montréal's 2014 production of *Turandot*, with Guy Bélanger (Emperor Altoun) and Galina Shesterneva (Turandot).

PHOTO: YVES RENAUD, COURTESY OPÉRA DE MONTRÉAL

Left: Canadian Opera Company General Director Lotfi Mansouri (center) with Toby Tanenbaum (l) and Joey Tanenbaum (r) outside the new administrative offices and rehearsal building of the Canadian Opera Company, the Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre. Photo circa 1985–1987.

PHOTO: COURTESY CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY

# LES VOIX DU NORD: UN SURVOL DE L'OPÉRA AU CANADA

Depuis quatre siècles, le Canada a fusionné ses patrimoines français et anglais afin de créer un continuum unique de l'opéra. **PIERRE VACHON** explore l'évolution constante de notre art au Canada. À l'occasion du congrès Opéra 2016, qui aura lieu du 18 au 21 mai à Montréal, nous présentons cet article en anglais et en français. Traduction anglaise de Henry Gauthier.

**D**eux ans avant que le navigateur français Samuel de Champlain ne fonde officiellement la ville de Québec, on pourrait presque affirmer que l'opéra avait semé des graines en terre canadienne. Le 14 novembre 1606, la pièce chantée *Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France* de Marc Lescarbot est présentée à Port-Royal d'Acadie en Nouvelle-Écosse. Quatre siècles plus tard,

l'opéra continue d'occuper de nouveaux pans de la vie culturelle au Canada.

L'évolution de l'opéra au Québec, et ailleurs au pays, s'est faite par à-coups tout au long du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle. On y donnait des concerts au cours desquels des extraits d'opéra étaient joués. À leur arrivée, des Européens emportèrent des œuvres de compositeurs français de renom comme Jean-Baptiste

Lully. Bientôt, il y eut suffisamment d'interprètes et de musiciens pour présenter des soirées de musique. Vers la fin du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle, les Anglais s'établirent, important de grands classiques populaires tels que l'opéra-comique de Charles Dibdin, *The Padlock*.

Malgré des périodes d'instabilité politique et économique, et parfois l'opposition du clergé qui mettait en doute

**1914** Wagner's complete *Ring* cycle is performed in Canada for the first time, by the Quinlan English Opera Company in Montreal.

**1938** Soprano Teresa Stratas is born in Toronto.



**1940** *Pelléas et Mélisande* has its Canadian premiere at the Festivals de Montréal, conducted by Wilfrid Pelletier.

**1950** Canadian Opera Company is founded in Toronto by Arnold Walter.



**1954** Saskatchewan-born tenor Jon Vickers makes his operatic debut as the Duke of Mantua in Verdi's *Rigoletto* at the Toronto Opera Festival.

**1955** The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation includes excerpts from *Wozzeck* in its *L'Heure du concert* program.

**1960** Baritone Gerald Finley (right) is born in Montreal.





The Place des Arts, home to Opéra de Montréal.

## ENGLISH

of the expanding railroad network for continental tours. As masterpieces by Mozart, Rossini and Donizetti debuted in Europe, they were soon brought to Canada, sometimes in their native language, sometimes in English translation. In 1856, the English troupe Pyne and Harrison toured with *La sonnambula* and *La Fille du régiment*.

### An Authentic Voice Emerges

**B**y the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Canada's own vocal artists and composers began to emerge at home and abroad. Studios were established to train singers. In 1872, Emma Lajeunesse, a young singer

from Quebec better known as "Albani," seduced London at her debut. She would be among the first in a string of Canadian singers to take to international stages. The success of works by Offenbach and Johann Strauss Jr. encouraged local composers to begin writing operas, among them Célestin Lavigne's *La Fiancée des bois* and Calixa Lavallée's *Jeanne d'Arc*. The very first permanent French-Canadian opera troupe was formed in 1893.

By the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, opera was fully established in Quebec. Montreal became a port of entry for numerous foreign artists and an essential stop on tours by the Metropolitan Opera. After

World War II, increased funding at the federal level assisted the growth of opera companies throughout the provinces:

Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera, Edmonton Opera, Manitoba Opera, Calgary Opera, Saskatoon Opera and Pacific Opera Victoria. Numerous music schools and conservatories were established across the country. Radio, television and recording, plus a booming population of European immigrants, brought even greater

**Ever since the early years of the colonial period, opera has played a significant role in Canadian culture.**

#### 1963

Edmonton Opera is founded. Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne make their role debuts in *Norma* at Vancouver Opera.



**1967** Expo 1967, the world's exposition in Montreal, features performances of

*Louis Riel* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* by Canadian Opera Company, and *Otello* and *Faust* by the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.



**1969** Manitoba Opera is founded in Winnipeg. The company's first fully staged production, *Madama Butterfly*, would follow in 1973.

**1972** Calgary Opera is founded. Its first season features *La bohème* and *Rigoletto*.

**1978** Saskatoon Opera is founded.





Winnipeg Mayor Stephen Juba (far right) holds a proclamation establishing Manitoba Opera Week in Winnipeg, while Manitoba Opera Administrative Director Bruce Lang (far left) and other company representatives look on. Photo circa early 1970s.

## FRANÇAIS

la moralité du répertoire lyrique, le 19e siècle vit l'arrivée continue d'œuvres et d'interprètes réputés. Les artistes étrangers profitèrent de l'expansion du réseau ferroviaire pour organiser des tournées à l'échelle du continent. Les chefs-d'œuvre de Mozart, Rossini et Donizetti, qui étaient alors joués en Europe, étaient également présentés au Canada (bien souvent dans une traduction anglaise). En 1856, la troupe britannique Pyne & Harrison effectuait une tournée avec *La sonnambula* et *La fille du régiment*.

### L'émergence d'une voix authentique

Vers la fin du 19e siècle, de premiers artistes natifs du Canada

commencèrent à faire parler d'eux : une jeune cantatrice québécoise Emma Lajeunesse, plus connue sous le nom d'Albani, séduisit Londres dès ses débuts en 1872. Elle fut parmi les premières d'une lignée de chanteurs québécois à se produire sur les scènes internationales. Des ateliers furent créés pour former des chanteurs, et le succès rencontré par les œuvres d'Offenbach et Johann Strauss Jr. encouragea les compositeurs locaux à écrire des opéras tels que *La fiancée des bois* de Célestin Lavigreur et *Jeanne d'Arc* de Calixa Lavallée. Fait étonnant : la toute première compagnie permanente franco-canadienne vit le jour en 1893.

A l'aube du 20e siècle, l'opéra était pleinement établi au Québec. Montréal

devint une porte d'entrée pour un grand nombre d'artistes étrangers et un passage obligé des tournées du Metropolitan Opera. Après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, l'augmentation des subventions au niveau fédéral participa au développement de compagnies d'opéra dans toutes les provinces : la Canadian Opera Company, la Vancouver Opera Company, l'Edmonton Opera, le Manitoba Opera, le Calgary Opera, le Saskatoon Opera et le Pacific Opera Victoria. On vit apparaître de nombreuses écoles de musiques et des conservatoires dans tout le pays. L'arrivée de la radio, de la télévision et du disque, en plus d'un accroissement significatif de la population européenne immigrée, permirent une meilleure diffusion de

**1980** Pacific Opera Victoria and Opéra de Montréal are founded. Canadian composer Claude Vivier's *Kopernikus* (left) premieres in Montreal.

**1983** Opéra de Québec is founded in Quebec City under the direction of tenor and conductor Guy Bélanger. OPERA America holds its annual opera conference in Toronto.

**1990** The contemporary opera company Chants Libres is founded in Montreal by Pauline Vaillancourt (below).



**1993** The Canadian Opera Company's double-bill of *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Erwartung* marks director Robert Lepage's first opera production.

**1999** OPERA America holds its annual opera conference in Vancouver.





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acceptance and prosperity to opera.

The culmination of the French-Canadian opera tradition was Expo 67, the world's fair held in Montreal. The city transformed itself into one of the most important opera centers of the world, presenting La Scala, the Vienna State Opera, the Bolshoi Opera, the Royal Opera of Sweden and the State Opera of Hamburg, all in their North American debuts.

### The Last 50 Years

Opera in Canada has continued its uncommon evolution in the past 50 years. Both the Quebecois and the English-Canadian traditions have become solidly entrenched and diversified in our culture; the art of opera rides a new wave of productions that demonstrate stunning creativity. In the province of Quebec alone, some 40 organizations offer opera (in all forms and covering the entire repertoire), including at least 20 organizations that have been created since the beginning of the millennium. In the rest of Canada, practically every province has its own opera house with annual seasons and events.

Our era is characterized by exceptional singers recognized nationally and internationally. Like Albani at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a new generation of singers is making its mark globally. They are more numerous because the school system for opera has become more robust. In Montreal alone, four universities offer opera training, with three also offering young artist programs that serve as springboards toward new careers.

In addition to distinguished vocal artists, Canada has produced a wide range of creative artists, as well: Canadian conductors, stage directors, designers and artisans are leading figures in the international opera community. They come not just from opera, but from the theater world and from the cinematic tradition, bringing visions outside the traditional notions of opera. The nation has given us Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Bernard Labadie, Robert Lepage, François Girard, Robert Carsen, Michael Levine and Joel Ivany, to name a few.

The classic repertoire remains the primary focus for certain companies, but other companies have taken on the role of serving a more adventurous audience base. Regional companies, which once favored light opera, have increased

*Continued on page 44*

l'opéra et sa prospérité.

L'opéra de tradition canadienne-française a connu son apogée lors de l'Exposition universelle de Montréal, Expo 67. La ville se métamorphosa en l'une des plus belles scènes d'opéra du monde, accueillant La Scala, l'Opéra d'État de Vienne, le Bolchoï, le Royal Opéra de Suède et l'Opéra d'État de Hambourg. Tous faisaient leurs grands débuts en Amérique du Nord.

### Les 50 dernières années

Elles connaissent au Canada une impulsion peu commune. La vie lyrique québécoise, comme canadienne d'ailleurs, s'est solidement implantée et diversifiée. Notre art est porté par un souffle puissant dont les réalisations se déclinent avec une créativité vivifiante. Au Québec seulement, il existe une quarantaine d'organismes dont l'activité offre de l'opéra (sous toutes ses formes et couvrant tout le répertoire), dont une vingtaine depuis le début du nouveau millénaire seulement! Au Canada, pratiquement chaque province possède désormais sa maison d'opéra ou un événement lyrique annuel.

Ce nouvel âge d'or se caractérise avant tout par le nombre exceptionnel de chanteurs reconnus sur le plan national et international. Si le rayonnement des chanteurs québécois remonte à notre Albani (fin 19<sup>e</sup> siècle), une nouvelle génération de chanteurs s'illustre plus que jamais partout dans le monde. Ils sont plus nombreux car le système scolaire s'est solidifié et

élargi depuis 50 ans. Le cas de Montréal est éloquent : des quatre universités offrant toutes une formation lyrique, trois d'entre elles possèdent aussi leur atelier lyrique, sorte de tremplin vers la carrière!

Ce nouvel âge d'or aussi pour de nouveaux venus dans le monde lyrique depuis les années 90 : chefs d'orchestre, metteurs en scène, concepteurs et artisans. Ils viennent du théâtre ou du cinéma, et ils apportent à l'opéra une vision détachée du carcan de la tradition. Le Canada nous a donné Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Bernard Labadie, Robert Lepage, François Girard, Robert Carsen, Michael Levine et Joel Ivany.

Si le grand répertoire reste la mission première de certaines compagnies, les régions emboîtent désormais le pas de la grande machine pour satisfaire un public élargi et plus curieux venu surfer sur sa découverte de l'opéra au cinéma. Jadis terreau fertile du répertoire léger porté par des troupes souvent amateurs, les régions ont elles aussi élargi leur offre artistique pour



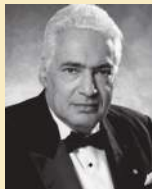
The program cover for Vancouver Opera's first production, *Carmen*, in 1960.

*Suite à la page 44*

2007 Manitoba Opera presents the world premiere of *Transit of Venus* by Victor Davies and Maureen Hunter.



2013 OPERA America holds its annual opera conference in Vancouver.



2014 Impresario and stage director Irving Guttman, founding artistic director of Vancouver Opera and "the father of opera in Western Canada," dies at age 86.

2016 OPERA America holds its annual opera conference in Montreal. ■



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- \*Leonardo Capalbo (Macduff)
- \*Burak Bigili (Banco / Banquo)
- \*Michael Chioldi (Macbeth) April 24
- \*Jill Gardner (Lady Macbeth) April 24

##### “The Magic Flute”

- \*Sylvia Schwartz (Pamina)
- \*Gordon Bintner (Papageno)
- \*Christina Poulitsi (Queen of the Night)
- \*Jordan Bisch (Sarastro)
- \*Julius Ahn (Monostatos)
- \*Jessica Dold (First Lady)
- \*Diane Schoff (Second Lady)
- \*Raehann Bryce-Davis (Third Lady)
- \*Joshua Dennis (Tamino)



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# REBALANCING THE PORTFOLIO

Investments in contemporary American opera have altered the portfolio of repertoire, but has the field neglected its heritage in the process? **ROBERT MARX** examines changing trends in programming and offers insight for achieving artistic equilibrium.

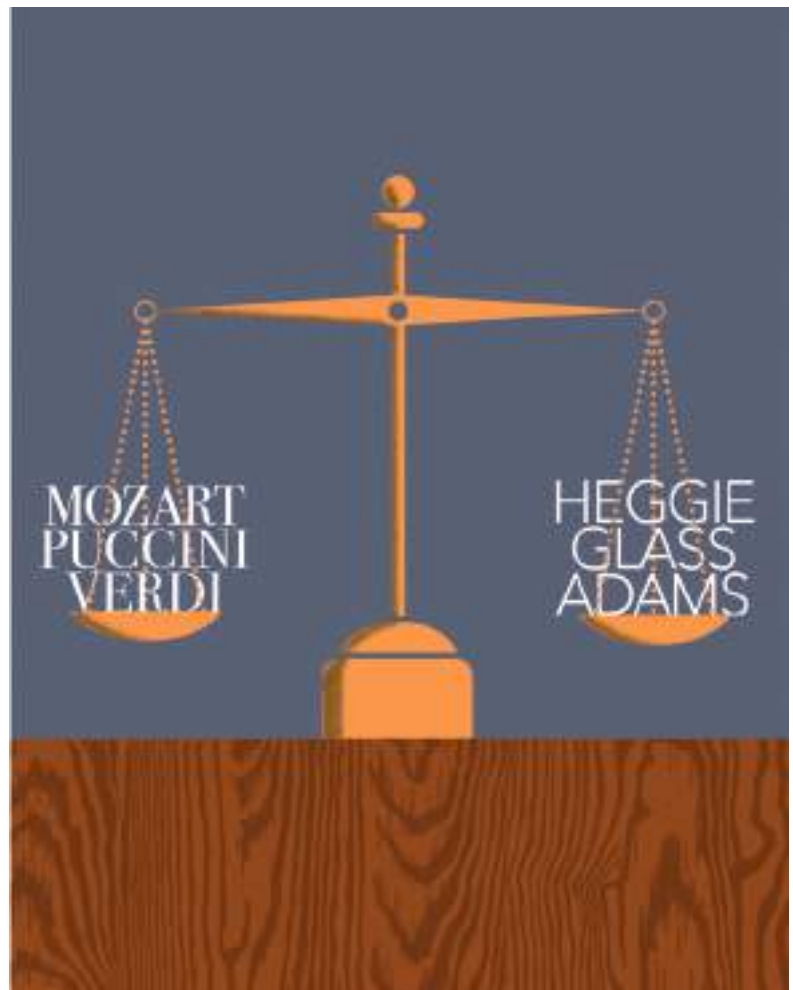
// **E**verything in opera must change, but in opera change is blocked.” That pithy quote from Peter Brook, one of the world’s most influential stage directors, seemed undeniable when he wrote it in 1968.

Brook spoke from experience at Covent Garden and the Met, but concerning one fundamental aspect of opera, time has proved him wrong. In comparison to the 1960s, today’s operatic repertoire shows tectonic change beyond established classics: According to OPERA America, nearly 400 new works have been produced by the professional opera companies of North America since 2000.

**Have typical productions of standard rep classics that still dominate subscriptions and audience expectations become a creative second tier?**

That statistic made me look back at the season of 1983–1984, when I wrote an overview of American opera and musical theater production on commission from the National Endowment for the Arts. My long-ago report is wildly out of date today, but one item in it is worth mentioning as a point of comparison: Regarding new work that season, the entire OPERA America constituency produced just a single world premiere (Peter Schickele’s *The Abduction of Figaro* at Minnesota Opera) along with two U.S. premieres (including Tippett’s 1955 *The Midsummer Marriage* at San Francisco Opera). Everything else on stage that season — coast to coast, border to border — was more or less “standard rep.”

Since then, the field’s active repertoire has shifted



monumentally. The “top 10” performance lists are still dominated by Mozart, Verdi and Puccini classics, but rising up from below is a roster of contemporary operas and historic rarities that appear throughout the U.S. in houses large and small.

The opera profession in this country has every reason to be proud of that evolutionary push, one sustained in no small

degree by the multiple new work initiatives of OPERA America and other organizations. But if the muscularity of American opera has moved toward contemporary composition, has institutional energy (and its mirror image, institutional exhaustion) shifted with it? Have typical productions of standard rep classics that still dominate subscriptions and audience expectations become

a creative second tier? Without reducing sustained opportunities for new operas, is there now a parallel need to “rebalance the portfolio,” bringing old and new in synch?

This moment in American opera has a counterpart in the evolution of our country’s not-for-profit resident theaters. During their early years (1960s–1970s), the regional companies produced mostly classics, but for reasons

on 221 productions at 33 theaters across the United States, writing not only about the plays, but also the emerging institutions that staged them at a time of economic malaise. In terms of repertoire, 1967–1968’s most-produced playwrights in America other than Shakespeare were Shaw, Molière, Albee, Anouilh, Brecht, Pirandello and Chekhov. But almost 50 years later in 2014–2015 (using data published by the Theatre

Communications Group), the most-produced playwrights in America other than Shakespeare were Christopher Durang, Sarah Ruhl, Neil Simon, John Patrick Shanley, Chekhov, Tarell Alvin McCraney and Tom Stoppard. Only Chekhov remained as a voice from the past.

This shift of new plays into the not-for-profit sector brought

about remarkable achievements. It opened American theater to new communities, sensibilities and themes with a diversity both onstage and off that was once unimaginable. As a base for new plays, the center held — in many ways, brilliantly — but with artistic diminishment at the extremes: on one side, the loss of a truly bold American experimental theater of international influence, and on the other, the field’s youthful mission to keep world drama alive on American stages along the lines of European national theaters. Of course, the most familiar classic play titles may still be found throughout the U.S. in any given season, but one can live a theatrical lifetime in America today and never encounter the true depth of dramatic literature’s 2,500-year legacy. In the field’s drive to be contemporary and connected, it can seem cut off from the vast theater inheritance that got us here, like a family gathering

to which grandparents were disinvented. Ballet and symphonic music have had their own historic conflicts between old and new, but this may be opera’s moment in that struggle.

Some would argue that this circumstance is healthy; that art must thrive in contemporary form alone; that only what is born now can truly speak to us. I agree to the extent that creativity must be matched to the styles, concerns and language of living artists and audiences. But to be contemporary and yet removed from the past can reduce the experience to reinventing the wheel.

For a century or more, opera’s repertory was mostly a “top 40” canon of continually recycled old works made modern through evolving visual style. That stage language grew from naturalism to abstraction, to updating, and onward to *Regietheater* and “Eurotrash.” The search for style reflected creativity, but also uncertainty. As Peter Brook wrote, “All the different elements of staging — the shorthands of behavior that stand for certain emotions; gestures, gesticulations and tones of voice — all are fluctuating on an invisible stock market all the time.”

It seems counterintuitive that opera’s “stock market” today is at its most volatile in the classics and at its most stable in new work. This reversal of opera’s traditional comfort zone has been building for a generation. Even in that distant 1983–1984 season, New York City Opera’s top box office was for new productions of *Akhnaten*, *Sweeney Todd* (in its first opera house staging) and *La rondine*, while the lowest receipts were for revivals of *Bohème*, *Barbiere* and *Butterfly*. It looked like an anomaly then, but turned out to be prescient.

So much funding, press attention, management ambition and audience marketing is now focused on the new that commissions can become indispensable to a company’s operations. In comparison to custom-made commissions, opera classics are too often left to habit,

*Continued on page 45*



JAMES TY CUMBER

***In the field’s drive to be contemporary and connected, it can seem cut off from the vast theater inheritance that got us here, like a family gathering to which grandparents were disinvented.***

both economic and creative they eventually replaced the commercial theater as our culture’s prime engine for new plays. (The arrival of musicals is a separate story.) Once the development of new American drama shifted definitively to the not-for-profits — and eventually came to define them as institutions — the baseline

national presence of classic drama from the Greeks to Brecht fell off.

One of my prime sources for then-and-now comparisons is Julius Novick’s indispensable study from 1968, *Beyond Broadway: The Quest for Permanent Theatres*. Even though his work concerns another time and discipline, the institutional issues Novick focused on then are relevant to many opera houses today.

Novick’s book is an account of the 1967–1968 regional theater season in America. He reported

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View them in action at [dallasopera.org/womenconductors](http://dallasopera.org/womenconductors)

Currently, accomplished female singers, opera coaches, composers, accompanists and instrumentalists with established careers looking to move into conducting are encouraged to apply to the second residency. While successful applicants will generally be 40 or younger, there is no strict age cutoff. This year's institute will be November 26 through December 10, 2016.

**Submit Applications by April 22, 2016:**  
[dallasopera.org/womenconductors](http://dallasopera.org/womenconductors)

Photo@Karen Almond

# THE NEA AT 50:

Since its founding, the National Endowment for the Arts has provided strategic funding and public affirmation that continues to serve as an imprimatur of excellence. **DON LEE** explores the agency's legacy through conversations with industry leaders.

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President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Arts and Humanities Act on September 29, 1965.

***A thumbs-up from a federal agency, backed by a panel of prominent experts, enables a local arts organization to earn respect and financial support back home.***

In launching the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the National Endowment for the Arts last October, President Barack Obama defined American music as a mirror of America's character.

"Our music in particular has always been an honest reflection of who we really are," the president said. "A reflection of our successes and our shortcomings, of our diversity, our imagination, our restlessness, of our stubborn insistence on blending the old with the new, tradition with experimentation."

Among our nation's most notably authentic traditions, such as jazz, blues, pop and hip-hop, opera too has now become part of the mosaic of American society, thanks in large part to strategies adopted over the last five decades by the NEA. On September 29, 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson signed legislation creating the NEA, opera had long since been firmly established in New York, Chicago and San Francisco, with notable footholds in cities like New Orleans, Dallas, Cincinnati and Milwaukee, but for many Americans the opera experience

was limited to radio broadcasts by the Metropolitan Opera or visits from the Met's annual touring program, which shrank over the years and finally ended in 1986.

Today, more than 200 professional, educational and amateur opera companies dot the map from coast to coast, many of which approach the agency for support. "NEA challenge and advancement grants played a huge role in turbocharging these opera companies," says OPERA America President/CEO Marc A. Scorca.

But money is only part of it. Longtime observers also point to the agency's imprimatur, which continues to carry weight. In the 1980s, when Patrick J. Smith ran the agency's opera program, an endowment grant was, Smith says, a "seal of approval," even if the amount was small, because "you could then go out in the neighborhood and get more money." A thumbs-up from a federal agency, backed by a panel of prominent experts, enables a local arts organization to earn respect and financial support back home.

Funding soon expanded to nurture the creation of new American opera. When the NEA came into being, says Smith, "opera in America was wedded to the historic top 20 or 30 European operas, *Aida*, *Bohème* and *Carmen* all the way." In 1978, the agency's opera and musical theater programs were combined, a shift that opened up a new funding channel for non-profit musical theater, which, Smith says, "included a lot of far-out stuff."

At the time, the NEA had been wondering how to delineate its potential role in productions like

*Continued on page 46*



Leontyne Price, an NEA Opera Honors recipient, is paid homage by Plácido Domingo backstage at the 2008 awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.



## NEA OPERA HONORS RECIPIENTS

From 2008 through 2011, the NEA, in partnership with OPERA America, administered the NEA Opera Honors, lifetime achievement awards that celebrated America's significant contributions to the art form. Interviews with awardees from all four years are available on the NEA's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/NEAarts](http://youtube.com/NEAarts).

### 2008

Carlisle Floyd  
Richard Gaddes  
James Levine  
Leontyne Price

### 2009

John Adams  
Frank Corsaro  
Marilyn Horne  
Lotfi Mansouri  
Julius Rudel

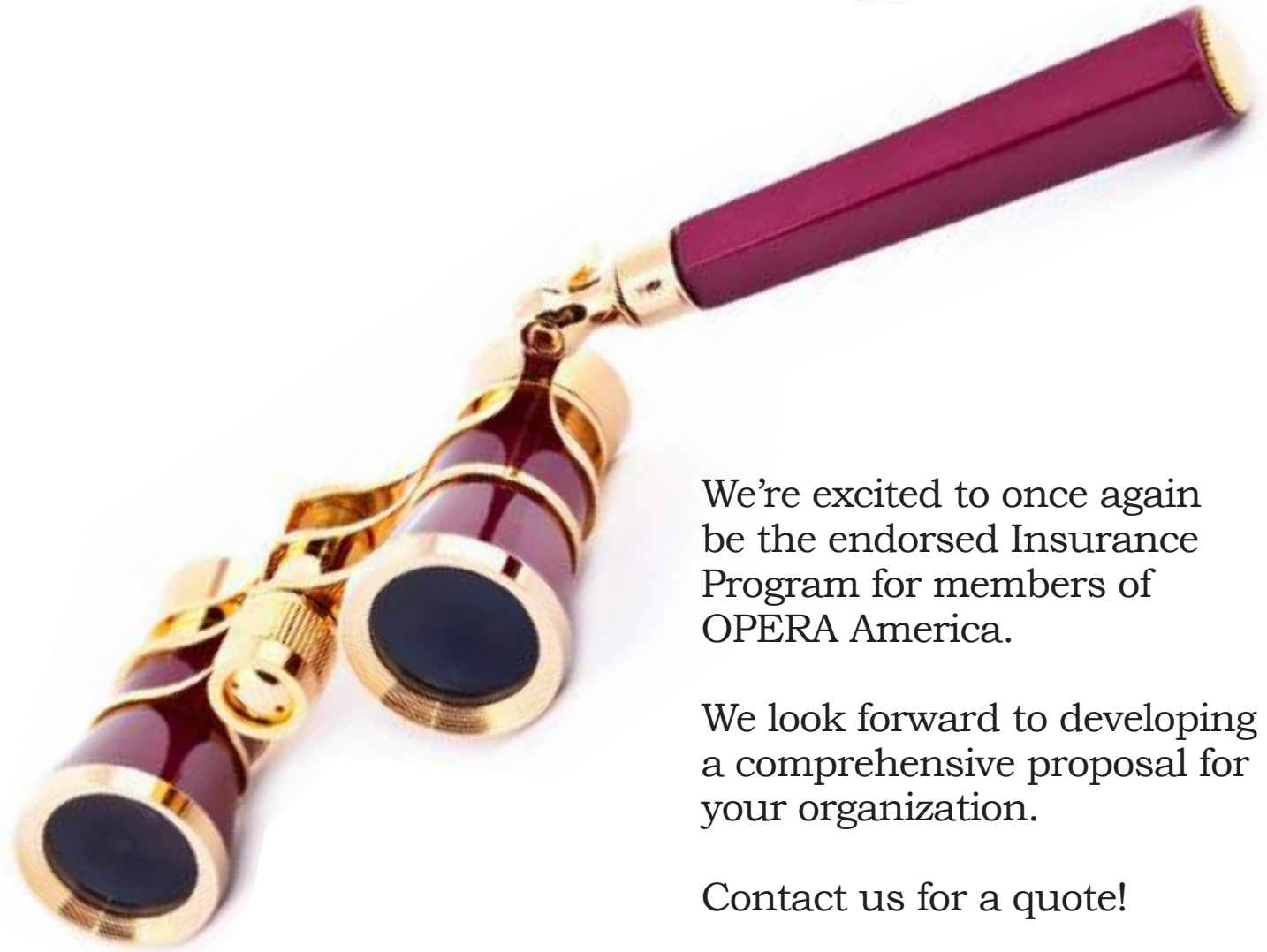
### 2010

Martina Arroyo  
David DiChiera  
Philip Glass  
Eve Queler

### 2011

John Conklin  
Speight Jenkins  
Risè Stevens  
Robert Ward

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# PERMISSION TO DREAM



Members of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán in Arizona Opera's 2014 production of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* by José Martínez and Leonard Foglia.

TIM TRUMBLE

**Marketing budgets are frequently constrained by risk-averse strategies that target the bottom line.**

**MATTHEW SIGMAN** reports on an OPERA America initiative funded by the Getty Foundation that loosens the purse strings to unleash the imagination.

Money can't buy the love of opera, but with the financial support of the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, OPERA America's Building Opera Audiences program is investing in initiatives designed to welcome new attendees, retain existing devotees and bring lapsed audiences back into the fold. Since its inception in 2013, the program has awarded 35 grants totaling \$1.2 million. Awards have ranged from \$7,500 to \$90,000, with most in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range.

Grant applications are adjudicated by independent panels composed of arts marketing professionals from outside the opera field, as well those with previous opera management experience. Jim Atkinson, director of programs and services at ArtPride New Jersey, an advocacy association, served on the 2013 and 2016 Getty grant panels. "Opera faces the same issues other disciplines struggle with," he says. "How do people make decisions with regard to their discretionary time? How do we retain audiences and court new ones? These are universal."

Robert Sweibel, who recently joined New York's Roundabout Theatre Company as director of marketing and audience development after 10 years with Berkeley Repertory Theatre, served as a panelist for the 2014 awards. Sweibel agrees with Atkinson that certain challenges are universal, but adds that successful strategies must first be local. "Every organization needs its own audience development strategy that springs from its mission and is community-focused," he says.

The results of Building Opera Audiences initiatives understandably have been mixed. A review of final reports submitted by grant recipients of the first two cycles, along with interviews of project leaders, reveals that some grantees have achieved their key objectives. Others have missed their primary goals, but report meaningful secondary achievements, such as media attention and community engagement. Only one grantee suspended its project entirely.

Such variations in results are healthy indicators of risk-taking in any research

and development venture, and the foundation did not ask OPERA America to specify formal metrics of success. Says Mark Hernandez, consultant to the Getty Foundation: "We did not say, 'We know you are successful when you are doing five grand operas and attendance is going up.' That's not helpful. Instead, we turned the question around to have the grantee set the parameters. 'What does success mean to you? How do you define it?' We're comfortable with hard data, but it's also okay to say 'The community values us more, and we know this because the mayor now comes to performances' or 'We see more parents bringing their children.'"

A success corresponding to Hernandez's definition can be seen in the implementation of *Caminos a la ópera* (Pathways to Opera), a LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO initiative funded by a 2014 Getty grant. The funds supported the presentation of *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*, a mariachi opera by José Martínez and Leonard Foglia that Lyric had commissioned. The company had previously presented Martínez and Foglia's

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first mariachi opera, *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, to great success.

“Our goal was never to get a certain number of audience members,” says Cayenne Harris, director of Lyric Unlimited, the company’s community engagement program. “I don’t want to diminish the importance of numbers — we were thrilled to have a great turnout — but we didn’t begin with a number in mind. The primary purpose for Lyric in presenting these mariachi operas was about engaging communities that had no prior relationship with opera, introducing people to the operagoing experience and creating a sense of ownership of a cultural institution that is meant to serve the entire city of Chicago.”

The Getty Foundation requires that OPERA America communicate the results of the Building Opera Audiences program to foster learning among its member companies. “We want people to talk and share their stories of success and failure,” says Hernandez. “We know that not everything is transferable, but we want to get people talking, thinking and being creative.” Toward that objective, OPERA America features Getty-funded projects in *Opera America Magazine* and presents updates at its annual conference and the Marketing and Public Relations Forum.

## Categories of Engagement

The 37 successful applicants reflect both the “universal” challenges to which panelist Jim Atkinson refers, as well as the community-specific strategies for which his fellow panelist Robert Sweibel advocates. Varying in scope and scale, most Getty grant awards have fallen into six marketing silos:

**Fostering Perceptual Change:** Founded on a belief that unfamiliarity with the art form and discomfort with the environment inhibit new attendees, educational and social events (often targeted at a demographic cohort) have been designed to stimulate near-term ticket purchases and long-term affinity. Examples include **FLORENTINE OPERA COMPANY**’s Bohème Society, an overture to young professionals; **LOS ANGELES OPERA**’s Newcomer Project, a series of social events combined with discounts; and **CHICAGO OPERA THEATER**’s Breaking the Walls, which targets culturally active patrons who do not attend opera, as well as those who do attend opera but not COT.

**Technology Development:** From smartphone apps to social media campaigns, grantees have fostered affinity through communication. **AMERICAN OPERA PROJECT**’s StageNote and **PALM BEACH OPERA**’s Opera @ The Waterfront

were designed to encourage dialogue between the company and audiences and among audience members themselves.

**SEATTLE OPERA**’s app facilitated transactions for tech-savvy subscribers, while **OPERA PHILADELPHIA**’s latest grant supports a communication and transaction app that will be deployed as part of a larger marketing strategy.

### **Welcoming Ethnic Communities:**

Programs and performances have been designed to build relationships with ethnic enclaves. Examples include **ARIZONA OPERA**’s *Viva la Opera!*, a statewide partnership with Univision in conjunction with a mainstage performance of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*; Lyric Opera of Chicago’s aforementioned *Caminos a la ópera*; and **VANCOUVER OPERA**’s Transporting Opera Audiences, which appealed to suburban Asian communities.

**Establishing Presence:** Initiatives seeking to build general awareness include **SAN FRANCISCO OPERA**’s Community Open House, which offered tours, workshops and demonstrations at its opera house; **OPERA MEMPHIS**’s 30 Days of Opera, which features performances and events at a variety of venues; and **MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE**’s MOT Ambassadors, which will train individuals to engage audiences in the community.

**Transportation Services:** Grantees have sought to overcome potential anxiety regarding distance, traffic and parking. Examples include **CENTRAL CITY OPERA**’s Boomer Bus, designed to attract audiences from Denver; Vancouver’s Transporting Opera Audiences, which commandeered a mass transit train; and **SAN DIEGO OPERA**’s Opera on Track, which will engage urban populations along light rail lines.

**Market Research:** Opera Philadelphia and **MADISON OPERA** have invested in professional surveys and marketing analysis to segment their audiences and develop targeted programs and services. **SYRACUSE OPERA** collaborated with local arts and cultural organizations to extract likely households from a shared database for direct-mail marketing.

And then there are initiatives that defy categorization. **PORTLAND OPERA**’s Opera a la Cart leveraged food cart culture into a mobile opera theater. Brooklyn’s **OPERA ON TAP** will produce a virtual reality opera that will immerse audiences in a 360-degree theatrical experience. And **OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS**, addressing the lapse in operagoing associated with young adults in their child-rearing years, will pilot a child care program that provides an entertaining experience for children outside the theater while their parents attend mainstage matinee performances.



## BUILDING OPERA AUDIENCES GRANT RECIPIENTS

### 2013

American Opera Projects  
Arizona Opera  
Florentine Opera Company  
Los Angeles Opera  
Madison Opera  
Opera on the James  
Opera Memphis  
Opera Theater of Pittsburgh  
San Francisco Opera  
Sarasota Opera  
Seattle Opera  
Syracuse Opera  
Vancouver Opera

### 2014

Arizona Opera  
Central City Opera  
Cincinnati Opera  
Los Angeles Opera  
Lyric Opera of Chicago  
Opera Philadelphia  
Palm Beach Opera

### 2015

Florida Grand Opera  
Los Angeles Opera  
Lyric Opera of Chicago  
Opera Lancaster  
Opera Memphis  
Opera Saratoga  
Portland Opera  
Tapestry Opera  
Utah Symphony | Utah Opera

### 2016

Chicago Opera Theater  
Los Angeles Opera  
Michigan Opera Theatre  
Opera on Tap  
Opera Philadelphia  
Opera Theatre of Saint Louis  
San Diego Opera  
San Francisco Opera

## Mission Accomplished

There have been clear success stories in the Building Opera Audiences program, with companies offering quantitative and qualitative assessments that document the achievement of program objectives. Arizona Opera has been continually challenged by the aging and unpredictable timing of the seasonal return of its

*Continued on page 49*



National Opera Trustee Recognition Award recipients Michele S. Fabrizi, Cynthia du Pont Tobias, Jeanette Lerman-Neubauer, Jacqueline Badger Mars and Bernard Stotland, with OPERA America Chairman Frayda B. Lindemann and National Opera Trustee Recognition Program Chairman Carol F. Henry. Not present: Martha Rivers Ingram.

## TRUSTEE AND AMBASSADOR WEEKEND 2016

**F**rom February 17 to 20, OPERA America welcomed opera trustees and patrons from around the country for discussions, performances and special events in New York City. Over the course of the four days, members of OPERA America's National Trustee Forum convened to address key governance strategies, while members of the philanthropic Ambassador Circle embarked on cultural outings, including tours of the new Whitney Museum and the National Opera Center design exhibitions. In the evenings, trustees and Ambassadors attended performances at the Metropolitan Opera and The Juilliard School.

The highlight of the weekend was the ninth annual National Opera Trustee Recognition Awards Dinner, held on February 19 with record attendance. The evening — with cocktails, dinner and

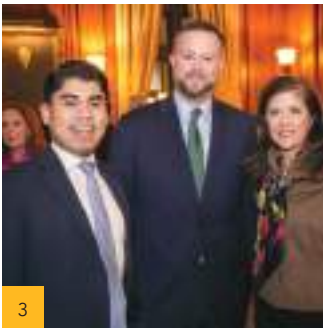
musical performances by Washington National Opera and the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program — celebrated the 2016 honorees of OPERA America's National Opera Trustee Recognition Program: **Michele S. Fabrizi** of Pittsburgh Opera, **Martha Rivers Ingram** of Nashville Opera, **Jeanette Lerman-Neubauer** of the Metropolitan Opera, **Jacqueline Badger Mars** of Washington National Opera and **Cynthia du Pont Tobias** of OperaDelaware, as well as **Bernard Stotland**, chairman of Opéra de Montréal, who received Opera.ca's National Opera Directors Recognition Award. Supported by Bank of America since its inception in 2008, the National Opera Trustee Recognition Program has highlighted the exemplary leadership, generosity and audience-building efforts of 40 American opera company trustees. ●

## National Opera Trustee Recognition Awards Dinner

**1.** Bruce Hyman, Stephen and Anne Bruckner, Ann Ziff and Simone Quarré. **2.** Timothy O'Leary, Christopher Hahn, Clyde B. Jones, Diana Reid and Marc Chazaud. **3.** Bank of America officers Jonathan Lopez, John Colucci and Patty Cleary. **4.** Bass Soloman Howard and pianist Thomas Bagwell perform an excerpt from Philip Glass' *Appomattox*. **5.** Past award recipients Elizabeth Eveillard ('12), Ruth Orth ('14), Susan Bienkowski ('15), Frank "Woody" Kuehn ('15), Susan F. and William C. Morris ('12), G. Whitney Smith ('08), and Jane A. Robinson ('09). **6.** Edward J. Ransby, Elba Haid, Christina Loewen, Larry Desrochers and Ann Owens. **7.** Bass-baritone Brandon Cedel and soprano Hyesang Park of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.

## Ambassador and Trustee Forum Events

**8.** Jane A. Gross and Rita Horiguchi at an Ambassador Circle lunch in Manhattan's Meatpacking District. **9.** Gretchen Smith, Rita Horiguchi, Elia Saenz, Anne Bruckner, Karin Eames, Terrence Tobias, Melody Schubert, Cokie Perry, Mary Blanchard and Steven Hirschberg on a tour of the National Opera Center.



ALL PHOTOS OF NATIONAL OPERA TRUSTEE RECOGNITION AWARDS DINNER BY JEFF REEDER. MONTAGE DESIGN BY JAMES TY CUMBIE.

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# THE ARTS



WNO *The Valkyrie*. Alan Held as Wotan (courtesy Karin Cooper)

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CORY WEAVER

San Francisco Opera's 2014 production of *Tosca* with Mark Delavan (Scarpia) and Brian Jagde (Cavaradossi).

## WEAVER PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT AT THE OPERA CENTER

**O**PERA America's latest design installation at the National Opera Center is dedicated to the work of Cory Weaver, one of the nation's most active photographers of opera productions. Over the past 15 years, Weaver has photographed productions at numerous companies, including a **THE GLIMMERGLASS FESTIVAL, OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS, PORTLAND OPERA** and

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA.** Also included in the exhibition are select costumes that have been featured in Weaver's photos.

"Shooting an opera production can be a very intimate experience for me," says Weaver. "I to try connect with the characters in the show — to hate a character or have compassion for a character. I hope my photographs reflect that — above and beyond the

photographic aspects of getting sharp, well-timed and correctly composed images."

The exhibition, which was curated by Weaver, runs through September 2016. It is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the National Opera Center's seventh-floor Design Gallery. ●

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# New Operas from SCHOTT | EAM

## Hannah Lash **Beowulf**

*Guerilla Opera* | World Premiere: May 20, 2016

Hannah Lash's work has been hailed as "striking and resourceful...handsomely brooding." Her adaptation of the epic poem explores the psychological stresses placed upon someone whose role it is to save lives and take care of others.



photo: Bob Handelman



photo: Philip Groshong/Cincinnati Opera

## Gregory Spears **Fellow Travelers**

Developed and co-commissioned by G. Sterling Zinsmeyer  
*Cincinnati Opera* | World Premiere: June 17, 2016

Based on the novel by Thomas Mallon, *Fellow Travelers* is a journey through the world of the 1950's American witchhunts, revealing an intimate, personal story set against the public, political backdrop of the "Lavender Scare."

## Tobias Picker **Dolores Claiborne**

*San Francisco Opera* | September 18, 2013

Commissioned by San Francisco Opera, Tobias Picker's thrilling setting of Stephen King's best-selling novel, *Dolores Claiborne* has been called "a triumph," "a brilliant musical incarnation," and "a momentous addition to the expanding canon of American opera."



photo: Cory Weaver



photo: Michael Daniel

## Douglas J. Cuomo **Doubt**

*Minnesota Opera* | January 26, 2013

Called "a philosophical yet lyrical whodunit" and a work "that speaks to the heart," *Doubt* features a libretto by John Patrick Shanley and is based on Shanley's Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play.

## Julian Anderson **Thebans**

*English National Opera* | May 3, 2014

*The New York Times* calls Anderson's treatment of the Greek trilogy "distinctively impressive" and "an opera like no other... arguably the most spectacular orchestral writing heard in any opera of the past half a century. For mastery of texture, color and invention, Mr. Anderson sets standards."



photo: Tristram Kenton

*Also recently premiered:*

**George Benjamin, *Written on Skin***

Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, July 2012

**Bernard Rands, *Vincent***

Indiana University, Jacobs School of Music, April 2011

**Richard Ayres, *Peter Pan***

Staatsoper Stuttgart, December 2013

**Gerald Barry, *The Importance of Being Earnest***

Los Angeles Philharmonic, April 2011 (concert) | Opéra National de Lorraine, March 2013 (staged)



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JEFF REEDER

Librettist Jonathan Moore and composer Stewart Copeland (at center) take a bow following excerpts from their new opera, *The Invention of Morel*, at the New Opera Showcase, as NOVUS NY Principal Conductor Julian Wachner looks on.

## THE NEW WORKS FORUM AND NEW OPERA SHOWCASE

In January, more than 100 opera artists, producers and publishers convened in New York City for OPERA America's annual New Works Forum, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Launched in 2011, the Forum allows opera professionals to share best practices, address common issues and experience readings and staged performances of new American works.

Over the course of three days, the group examined the evolving role of producers, explored socially resonant repertoire and addressed the collaborative relationship between composers, publishers and commissioners. In a special case-study session, representatives from **AMERICAN LYRIC THEATER, AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS** and **OPERA PHILADELPHIA** were joined by opera creators they have commissioned to discuss the unique relationship between a producing company and a composer/librettist team.

A key component of every New Works Forum is the opportunity to experience new works by both established and emerging composers. This year, OPERA America and NOVUS NY orchestra of Trinity Wall Street presented four operas

in development. Led by Julian Wachner, principal conductor of NOVUS NY, and guest conductors Daniela Candillari and Sara Jobin, the ensemble performed excerpts from *Beowulf* by Hannah Lash, *The Invention of Morel* by Stewart Copeland and Jonathan Moore, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Sheila Silver and Stephen Kitsakos, and *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang. The performances were streamed live and have been archived on OPERA America's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/OPERAAmerica](http://youtube.com/OPERAAmerica).

The event took place at Trinity Church and attracted a capacity audience of 400. In addition to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, support for the event was provided by The Francis Golet Charitable Lead Trusts and The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation.

"The New Opera Showcase is a rare and invaluable event for the entire opera community — composers, librettists, performers, producers and audiences alike," says OPERA America President/CEO Marc A. Scorca. "Composers often don't have the opportunity to hear their work with orchestra until they are in

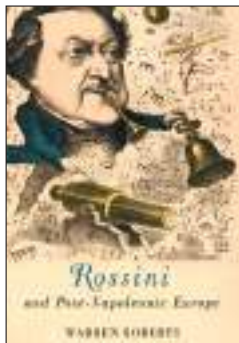
rehearsals before the premiere and by then, it's too late for them to make adjustments. Presenting these excerpts in a public performance gave the composers immediate feedback from the audience. The performances with orchestra also benefitted opera producers by enabling them to hear the composers' full sonic landscapes in a way that simply reading a score cannot."

As in past years, the New Works Forum was planned to coincide with the PROTOTYPE Festival, co-produced by **BETH MORRISON PROJECTS** and **HERE**, which presents innovative opera and music-theater works throughout New York City. Forum participants attended the festival's presentation of *Angel's Bone* by Du Yun and Royce Vavrek and *La Reina* by Jorge Sosa and Laura Sosa Pedroza (co-presented by American Lyric Theater). The timing of the Forum also allowed participants to take in American Modern Ensemble's double bill of Stewart Copeland's *The Cask of Amontillado* and Robert Paterson and Mark Campbell's *The Whole Truth*. ●

# PUBLICATIONS

## ROSSINI AND POST-NAPOLEONIC EUROPE

By Warren Roberts  
University of Rochester Press



Using the techniques of a historian, the author analyzes *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *La Cenerentola*, *La gazza ladra*, *Matilde di Shabran* and *Il viaggio a Reims* as responses,

each in its own way, to the historical events experienced by Rossini. This book examines the composer in his historical context during the Napoleonic domination of Italy, the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in Naples in 1815 and the 1830 Revolution in Paris. Rossini emerges as a well-informed observer of politics and religion in a time of reaction and revolution, and his comic operas are seen anew as commentaries on a complicated era.

## THE WAGNER STYLE

By Arnold Whittall  
Plumbago Books

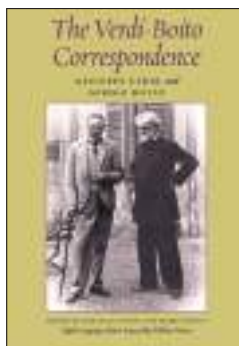


This anthology, published on the occasion of Arnold Whittall's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, presents a collection of the esteemed musicologist's key writings on Richard Wagner. A selection of 10

essays examines the composer's three Romantic operas (*Der fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*), the four parts of the *Ring* cycle, and the remaining three music dramas (*Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Parsifal*). Also a specialist in modern music, Whittall ends his book with an account of *Wagner Dream*, a 2007 opera by British composer Jonathan Harvey. Detailed musical analyses punctuate the book.

## THE VERDI-BOITO CORRESPONDENCE

Edited by Marcello Conati  
and Mario Medici  
The University of Chicago Press



This English edition of the landmark *Carteggio Verdi/Boito*, which presents 301 letters between Giuseppe Verdi and his last, most gifted librettist, Arrigo Boito, documents an

extraordinary chapter in musical history. The letters provide fascinating snapshots of the daily life of European artists during the fertile last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while also offering crucial glimpses into the genesis of some of Verdi's greatest works. The volume features improvements and updates to the original edition, an appendix of undated correspondence and a short closing sketch of Boito's life after the death of Verdi.

## OPERA IN A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

Edited by Mary I. Ingraham, Joseph K. So  
and Roy Moodley  
Routledge Research in Music



Through historical and contemporary examples, this book explores multicultural representation in European operas, revealing their approaches to identity, meaning and creation. The essays bring academics from the field of

opera studies into conversation with the previously unheard voices of performers, critics and creators to speak on issues of race, ethnicity and culture in the genre. Together, they deliver a powerful critique of the way dominant cultures perpetuate their values and practices through operas that represent intercultural encounters. The authors consider works spanning three continents and more than two centuries, including the operas of Haydn, Strauss, Puccini and Wagner.

## THE REAL TRAVIATA: THE SONG OF MARIE DUPLESSIS

By René Weis  
Oxford University Press

This biography tells the rags-to-riches story of Marie Duplessis, the tragic



young woman whose life inspired Verdi's masterpiece *La traviata*, as well as one of the most scandalous and successful French novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *La Dame aux camélias* by

Alexandre Dumas fils. *The Real Traviata* chronicles Duplessis' rise from an abused teenage girl in provincial Normandy to one of the most fashionable and famous courtesans of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Paris, whose conquests included both Franz Liszt and the younger Dumas. The book also examines the immense fame that immediately followed the courtesan's untimely death at age 23.

## BEYOND BRITTEN: THE COMPOSER AND THE COMMUNITY

Edited by Peter Wiegold  
and Ghislaine Kenyon  
Aldeburgh Studies in Music



With his Aspen Award lecture in 1964, Benjamin Britten expressed a unique commitment to community and place. This book revisits this seminal lecture, but then uses it as a starting point

of reflection, inviting leading composers, producers and writers to consider the role of the composer in the community in Britain over the last 50 years. Essays explore the impact of Britten's legacy, the tradition of community opera at Glyndebourne, the influence of the London Sinfonietta, the role of music as therapy, music in the classroom, collaboration in music-making and ways of facilitating exchanges between composers and audiences.

# *NO BOUNDARIES BETWEEN SCIENCE & ART*

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THRESHOLD ACOUSTICS



gone on to multiple productions, and will be featured next season at **OPERA COLORADO**. Two more operas are in the works. “I never thought I would write an opera or have entrée into the opera world,” says Kaminsky. She considers the Opera Grants for Female Composers program a “clarion call” of opportunity.

In December, The Dallas Opera launched the Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors, designed to advance the careers of women on the podium. In defining the need for the program, the company cited OPERA America data indicating

that, although major North American opera companies (those with budgets over \$10 million) will present more than 100 productions in the 2015–2016 season, only five percent of those performances will be led by women. The program includes master classes, coaching, lectures and podium time with The Dallas Opera Orchestra. Six fellows and four observers were selected from a global pool of applicants.

“The program is not only about the

**Women conductors have led only five percent of major U.S. opera companies’ 2015–2016 productions.**

residency,” says Dallas Opera General Director and CEO Keith Cerny, who spearheaded the initiative. “It is also about building community and building visibility.” The company has made a five-year commitment to support alumni with follow-up

gatherings and conference calls, as well as strategies for personal branding. “Talented women conductors are too often passed over for important positions and opportunities because they haven’t caught the attention of artist management agencies, board search committees and the people most involved in an opera company’s day-to-day hiring decisions,” Cerny says.

Master classes were led by Dallas Opera Music Director Emmanuel Villaume and Principal Guest Conductor Nicole Paiement, who is also founder and artistic director of Opera Parallèle. Paiement emphasizes that opening doors for women is not just a matter of gender parity. It has direct bearing on the artistic product available to the entire field. “The more variety on the podium, the more variety in musicality you will have,” she says.

Although her primary role at the institute is working on technique, Paiement empathizes with the career challenges that female conductors face, both the perceptual barriers (“Musicians and audiences expect men,” she says) and the institutional barriers: “Women are eager to go into the professional world, but how? By assisting another conductor? It’s hard to move up from that step.” One suggestion for crossing that barrier, she says, is to build an ensemble of one’s own. “Pay musicians and get on the podium and get some experience,” she says. “It’s an investment in your career.”

Initiated in response to a standing-room-only session at *Opera Conference 2015* in Washington, D.C., the Women’s Opera Network was chartered “to increase awareness of and discussion about diversity and gender parity in the field, create action plans to promote the advancement of talented women, and become a source of support for emerging female professionals.” In January, the network launched a website ([operaamerica.org/WON](http://operaamerica.org/WON)) that presents data on the history of women in the field, spotlights women leaders in opera and features news stories about women’s accomplishments in both the nonprofit and business worlds.

# CHAUTAUQUA OPERA COMPANY 2016

**General & Artistic Director, Steven Osgood**

Giuseppe Verdi

## La Traviata

July 9, 2016

Directed by Keturah Stickann

Featuring Caitlin Lynch, Dominic Armstrong, and Todd Thomas

Gilbert & Sullivan

## The Mikado

July 29 & August 1, 2016

Directed by Ned Canty

Featuring Daniel Belcher and Kevin Burdette

Missy Mazzoli & Royce Vavrek

## Song From the Uproar

August 8, 2016

With film by Stephen Taylor

Featuring Abigail Fischer and NOW Ensemble

## Young Artist Week

August 1-8

### 2016

#### Young Artists

Quinn Bernegger  
Rachael Braunstein  
Chelsea Miller  
Brian James Myer  
Deanna Pauletto  
Abigail Rethwisch  
Dennis Shuman  
Hans Tashjian

Margaret Bridge  
Anthony Ciaramitaro  
Kelly Clarke  
Allison Deady  
Vincent Festa  
Lorenzo Miguel Garcia  
Megan Grey  
Addie Hamilton  
Emily Michiko Jensen  
Tesia Kwarteng  
Heath Martin  
Frank Rosamond  
Jake Skipworth  
Laura Soto-Bayomi  
Ryan Stoll  
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Data derived from OPERA America research served as the foundation for quantifying disparities and determining objectives for the network. A steering group analyzed OPERA America's annual reports to establish a baseline by which to measure progress. Among their findings, going back 25 years, is the consistently low presence of female general directors at the largest American opera companies (8 percent). The presence increases at midsize companies (17 to 21 percent), with parity to men coming closest at the smallest companies, where 49 percent of general director positions are held by women.

Deborah Sandler, general director and CEO of **LYRIC OPERA OF KANSAS CITY**, co-chairs the Women's Opera Network with Kaminsky and Kim Witman, senior director of **WOLF TRAP OPERA**. The program and its website are administered by OPERA America's

director of artistic services, Laura Lee Everett. Sandler is not surprised by the recent confluence of initiatives for composers, conductors and managers in opera: "There may be the appearance of 'all of a sudden' but the calls for solutions have been increasing," she says. She notes that the opera field is mirroring trends in other arts disciplines, including film, theater and museums.

Sandler believes that disparities in the presence of women in artistic positions in opera are particularly ironic, considering the preponderance of female ticket buyers in opera audiences. "If women are buying the tickets, shouldn't we be more sensitive as to how we tell our stories?" she says. The challenge, Sandler believes, is not simply a matter of advancing women today, but rather cultivating an environment that welcomes them in the future. "It's a deterrent for most women to look at the field and not see people

who look the same way they do," says Sandler. "Things will change when there are more women sitting in chairs where the decisions are made."

Sessions addressing opportunities for women are on the agenda for *Opera Conference 2016*, which will take place May 18 to 21 in Montreal. "Last year's conference was the catalyst for the Women's Opera Network," says Laura Lee Everett. "It demonstrated that these individual initiatives for women in opera — supported by men as well as women, by artists, administrators, trustees and philanthropists — are not just isolated campaigns. They are, collectively, a true movement toward parity in leadership. We're confident that as we raise the volume of awareness through the Women's Opera Network, we will raise the volume of opportunity for women." ●

—Matthew Sigman

**While men dominate the ranks of opera leadership, women form the majority of ticket buyers.**



**vancouveropera**

# STICKBOY

Music Composed by Neil Weisenseel.  
 Libretto by Shane Koyczan, based on his book, *Stickboy*.  
 Directed by Rachel Peake

## GROUND-BREAKING PRODUCTION

*Stickboy*, a moving opera about bullying

Scenic Design by Drew Facey | Costume Design by Carmen Alatorre  
 Projection Design by Jamie Nesbitt | Animation by Giant Ant

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## ENGLISH

their offerings to present the grand repertoire and less well-known works with equal enthusiasm. In cities both large and small, companies have ventured along paths less taken, reviving unknown works, creating original works and sometimes producing forgotten gems. *Aida* and *Carmen* rub shoulders with *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*.

Mozart, Rossini, Verdi and Puccini are presented alongside contemporary works by Canadian composers and librettists. In 2007, Manitoba Opera presented *Transit of Venus* by Victor Davies and Maureen Hunter. In 2014, Vancouver Opera addressed the scourge of bullying with *Stickboy* by Neil Weisensel and Shane Koyczan. Most recently, Canadian Opera Company has commissioned Ana Sokolović and Michel Marc Bouchard to create a new opera based on Bouchard's play *La Reine-Garçon*. This spring, Opéra de Montréal will offer the premiere of *Lilies*, by Bouchard and Kevin March. And in 2017, Opéra de Montréal will celebrate the city's 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the premiere of *Another Brick in the Wall*, based on *The Wall*, by Pink Floyd founder Roger Waters. New opera has most assuredly established itself on

Canada's stages.

**The repertoire of Canadian companies includes classics, new works and rarities: *Aida* and *Carmen* rub shoulders with *Stickboy* and *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*.**

*Carmen*, *Figaro* or *Faust* get a fresh new look and resonate with a diverse, younger and iconoclastic audience base. Young people who come to our productions also see theater and cinema, and they compare our art form to these other cultural experiences. Far from eroding our art, these fresh visions refresh our art.

The creativity that characterizes our productions is a direct result of challenging economic factors since the beginning of this new millennium. Those companies that have survived financial challenges have done so through ingenuity in demonstrating the pertinence of the art, while using similar ingenuity in managing increased production costs. Companies have amplified cultural education, marketing and community engagement activities in order to make our audiences more aware about opera and to provide more access to this all-encompassing art form. Public and private financing alike remain absolute necessities.

Today's Canadian opera scene is in step with our history, in step with our contemporary life — a period of change, diversity and frenetic creativity — and in step with the changing multicultural face of our provinces. The choice of repertoire, the way the productions are presented and new methods of reaching audiences allow us to make this art form accessible to everyone. We are vibrant and pointed resolutely to the future. ●

**Pierre Vachon** is a musicologist and director of communications, outreach and education at Opéra de Montréal.

## FRANÇAIS

présenter à leur communauté le grand répertoire et ce, avec autant de conviction. En ville comme en région, *Aida* et *Carmen* côtoient *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*.

En parallèle du traditionnel, certaines compagnies ont plutôt choisi de s'aventurer sur des sentiers peu déblayés, exhumant de l'oubli des œuvres inédites, originales, parfois même des perles égarées. Entre Mozart, Rossini, Verdi et Puccini se fauflent maintenant des œuvres nouvelles au propos bien ancré dans une contemporanéité parfois locale. Oui, la création lyrique a sa place bien affirmée.

En 2007, le Manitoba Opera présentait *Transit of Venus* de Victor Davies et Maureen Hunter. En 2014, le Vancouver Opera abordait le fléau de l'intimidation avec *Stickboy* de Neil Weisensel et Shane Koyczan. En 2016, Michel Marc Bouchard verra deux de ses œuvres portées sur une scène lyrique : *Les Feluettes* (musique de Kevin March) en mai 2016 à l'Opéra de Montréal, et Ana Sokolovic et Michel Marc Bouchard créeront un nouvel opéra inspiré de la pièce *La Reine-Garçon* de Bouchard pour la Canadian Opera Company. En mars 2017, le mythique *The Wall* de Roger Waters, un des fondateurs de Pink Floyd, deviendra l'opéra *Another Brick in the Wall* sur la scène de l'Opéra de Montréal pour souligner les fêtes du 375<sup>e</sup> de Montréal. Aujourd'hui, l'opéra contemporain s'est assurément taillé une place de choix au Canada.

L'effervescence lyrique touche aussi les façons de représenter l'opéra. Les nouvelles scénographies n'hésitent pas à créer des liens avec le contexte politico-social d'aujourd'hui pour mieux asseoir l'atemporalité de l'opéra et y mettre en valeur son actualité bien plus que sa présumée vétusté. Étonnant comment, dans un écrin actualisé, certaines œuvres (re)trouvent de leur pertinence! Étonnant aussi comment les moyens technologiques nouveaux revitalisent notre art. *Carmen*, *Figaro* ou *Faust* subissent des cures de jeunesse et résonnent plus fort encore chez un public hétéroclite et rajeuni aux attentes iconoclastes. Bien des jeunes qui affluent dans nos salles fréquentent le théâtre ou le cinéma et jugent notre art à leurs fréquentations culturelles. Cela ne peut qu'assurer la fraîcheur de notre art!

La créativité qui caractérise nos productions est aussi tributaire du facteur économique. En ce début de 21<sup>e</sup> siècle, les compagnies doivent rivaliser d'ingéniosité pour démontrer la pertinence d'un art aux coûts de production élevés dans un contexte de surenchère culturelle! À Montréal seulement, il y a plus de manifestations culturelles par capita que partout ailleurs au Canada! Pas étonnant que nos compagnies multiplient les activités éducatives et de médiation culturelle pour sensibiliser tous les publics à l'opéra et offrir toujours plus de portes d'accès à l'art total. Financements public et privé demeurent des sources vitales.

La vie lyrique canadienne est en santé. Elle est surtout en phase avec son temps (une période de bouillonnement, de diversité, de créativité à un rythme effréné) et avec le nouveau visage multiculturel de nos provinces. Répertoire, modes de présentation et avenues de diffusion, en favorisent l'accès pour tous, permettent sa dé-élitisation et donc, sa plus large portée. Si le nombre de productions a parfois diminué dans certaines compagnies, le Canada lyrique reste effervescent en ce moment et tourné résolument vers l'avenir. ●

**Pierre Vachon** est musicologue et directeur Communication, communauté et éducation à l'Opéra de Montréal.

impaled by diminished institutional momentum and generic expediency on stage. Far more than new work, they risk a loss of convincing urgency in performance — that deeply personal connection and justification that prevents any production from becoming routine. Without those qualities, the experience deflates.

As supremely difficult as it is to bring any new opera into being, it can be even more challenging to honestly fulfill a classic's score and text within a vigorously contemporary theatrical concept. Uncertainty abounds, and the shelf life of operatic theater is brief: Many benchmark productions that influenced me deeply when I was young would appear out of place now. Today's *Regietheater* will look just as dated in the future.

New operas also benefit from context. Since *Nixon in China* was first performed at Houston Grand Opera, I suspect that a majority of new American works have had timely connections to either headlines or a commissioning company's community identity. Issues that resonate locally often make it self-evident why an artistic director chose to produce a particular work; audiences (and boards) see a reason for *this* opera, *now*. That innate connection is a huge advantage, one that rarely surfaces with classic operas, beyond famous titles and familiar music.

There is no question that individual talent runs high in opera today, but so does collective compromise. Co-productions can have many creative advantages and prolonged success, but after initial runs they often fail in the stage configuration or culture of second and third venues. When multiple theaters share the same *Trovatore* or *Carmen*, forced savings diminish each theater's creative stamp on a bedrock classic. The economic justifications are real, but too often co-productions replace creative producing with shopping. Rehearsal time becomes so short in opera that singers revert to instinct or the body language they recall from previous productions. Stock supertitles translate heightened language into dull vernacular speech, creating a verbal mismatch to serious musical standards. Exaggerated marketing distorts an audience's expectations of the performance. Such

issues add up quickly and tend to land more heavily on the old than the new.

But if an opera company's mission is, in part, to sustain a roster of great classics, what are those works? Looking back, there's never been a standard rep set in stone. The "list," such as it is, has always changed over time.

The Metropolitan Opera's repertory is an instructive example. Among today's warhorse operas that went unproduced there for 20 consecutive seasons or more between 1900 and 1950 were *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, *Nozze di Figaro*, *Norma*, *Flying Dutchman*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Fledermaus*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Ballo in Maschera*, *Don Carlo* and *Otello*. Imagine going back in time 100 years to tell Toscanini and Gatti-Casazza that Meyerbeer would disappear, but Handel's operas would come back in force along with early Verdi, Mozart and Donizetti. They'd think it an insane prospect. The standard rep in 2016 is not what it was pre-World War II, and the canon in 50 years will be different yet again. Each generation anoints masterpieces according to its own taste (and always assumes its choices are eternal), but fashions change.

While some traditional operas may have played themselves out through over-familiarity or changing styles, even more central to rebalancing the classics is how they are produced. Peter Sellars has said that opera directors tend to "stage the plot synopsis instead of the plot." It's a provocative comment, but one often made true by severe limits on rehearsal time. It's not always a matter of stage directors settling for shorthand, but being forced into it by economic circumstance.

Kurt Herbert Adler, the legendary general director of San Francisco Opera, once said to me, "The rarest thing in all of opera is a stage director with a pair of ears," but I suspect that directors would have more effective ears if they had more time. Time to engage the work at hand and learn the language of music in depth; time to develop their concepts and rehearse with singers, coaches and conductors; time to reject and accept ideas as rehearsals play out; time to get everyone past their intimidating

**As supremely difficult as it is to bring any new opera into being, it can be even more challenging to honestly fulfill a classic's score and text within a vigorously contemporary theatrical concept.**

memories of historic performances. More often than not, opera companies have learned to use the resource of time when producing new commissions. The same skill should apply equally to core repertoire.

Of course, time is money. But it's foolish to suggest that funding initiatives alone could release the talent for a ground-breaking *Traviata*. Some existing resources can be reallocated: So many

productions are needlessly overproduced, overbuilt and (frankly) overstaffed. Too often, opera settles for what's simply accommodating, regardless of budget. But as Zelda Fichandler, that inspiring producer-philosopher, once wrote: "We need money, but much as we need money, we need — individually — to find, heighten and explore the informing idea of our theaters. We need to find our own faces. And not by looking at each other, but by looking within ourselves. We already look too much alike, and it has become a bore."

At heart, that is the threat to standard rep in 2016. The best theaters are always mission-based within their own communities, defined by an indigenous "informing idea" shared by artists and audiences. The same can apply to opera companies, as exemplified today by the field's considerable expansion in support of new work. Whether those new operas have future lives or not is irrelevant. Each is part of a movement going forward. That ongoing effort across this profession should never retrench, but instead spread even further to make our operatic inheritance just as necessary and integral on stage; just as indispensable; just as urgent. ●

**Robert Marx** is president of the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation in New York City, and has worked extensively in theater and opera as a producer, consultant and essayist. He was director of theater programs at both the National Endowment for the Arts and New York State Council on the Arts, and executive director of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center.



Former NEA Music and Opera Director Wayne S. Brown with the program's current director, Ann Meier Baker, at *Opera Conference 2015* in Washington, D.C..

Philip Glass' *Einstein on the Beach*. Deputy Director Hugh Southern commissioned writer and arts administrator Robert Marx to write an overview of experimental music theater and its place alongside opera and musicals. The report revealed "a complete yin and yang," says Marx, who went on to lead the NEA theater program and is now president of the Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation. In stark contrast to the experimental work, "opera continued to be defined by standard repertoire, with only a handful of new works in the pipeline," Marx says. "OPERA America leaders took that very seriously."

"Once you got Ardis Krainik, David DiChiera and David Gockley involved, then things started to move," Patrick Smith says, referring, respectively, to the leaders of **LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO**, **MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE** and **HOUSTON GRAND OPERA**. During his tenure leading OPERA America's board in the early 1980s, DiChiera spearheaded Opera for the Eighties and Beyond, a landmark initiative partially funded by the NEA. In 1980, the NEA also introduced an opera grant category called New American Works.

These efforts facilitated conversations among traditionalists and innovators, which resulted in new ways of doing things, particularly the commissioning of new American opera. Notable events helped advance the evolution. John Adams' *Nixon in China*, premiered in 1987 by Houston Grand Opera, integrated opera into recent historical events. John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*, premiered by **THE METROPOLITAN OPERA** in 1991, reawakened that company's

dormant commissioning process, drawing other companies into the dialogue of commissioning American works.

The NEA's funding practices buoyed this proliferation of new American opera. "The NEA was and is a bully pulpit that created momentum that we continue to see accelerate today," says Scorca. "Through its focus on new works, the NEA created seismic change in American opera."

While the NEA no longer maintains a dedicated contemporary opera initiative, the legacy of New American Works remains alive. After Wayne Brown took over the newly combined music and opera programs in the late 1990s, he worked closely with OPERA America to nurture the climate of collaboration in the field. One approach was to emphasize joint commissions to spread out expenses and guarantee second and third performance runs.

The current music and opera director, Ann Meier Baker, is enthusiastic about "scrappy new companies" that are shaking up the elitist reputation so often attached to opera by inhabiting non-traditional venues and exploring cutting-edge themes. "You don't put on a tuxedo for that," she says. "Contemporary work puts opera in a place where we deal with important issues and think about messy things." The program's opera specialist, Georgianna Paul, emphasizes that core repertoire continues to receive as much support as new work.

The NEA has also nurtured initiatives that bring opera to new audiences. The Great American Voices program created opportunities for military members

and families at 40 U.S. installations to experience live opera. Local opera companies saw it as a way to create natural, meaningful ties. "They'd been knocking on doors, and didn't have a way in," says Paul, "but with help from the NEA, they created a contact at every installation."

Partnering with OPERA America, the endowment introduced the NEA Opera Honors (2008–2011), which former chair Dana Gioia envisioned as an Academy Awards for singers, directors, composers and administrators. Baker says the honors demonstrated that "opera has become a vital part of the nation's culture," adding that its outgrowth, National Opera Week, continues to "help companies shine a light on the art form" by bringing free events to communities all over the country.

Among the agency's ongoing services to the field, one that has stood out to Charles MacKay is research. Prior to his current position as general director of **THE SANTA FE OPERA**, MacKay headed Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for 24 years and served as OPERA America's board chairman from 2004 to 2008. "Research is extremely useful, not just to our field, but to all disciplines," he says. For instance, he notes that not much was known about public consumption of the arts before the NEA undertook its quadrennial Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts. Some of their findings present challenges to American opera. According to the 2012 report, the audience attending opera performances constitutes only 2.1 percent of the U.S. population. "It is sobering information," concedes MacKay. "But it's better to know that and see what you can do on a grassroots basis to address the issue."

The NEA's research has also provided heartening data on the art form's contribution to the economy, arming company leaders with hard facts to demonstrate opera's public value. In February, the NEA and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis released findings from the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account, the first federal effort to analyze the arts and cultural sector's economic contributions. The report showed that opera injected nearly \$1 billion into the economy in 2013, accounting for 11 percent of all value added by tax-exempt performing arts organizations. The findings also revealed that between 1998 and 2013, opera experienced a higher average annual growth rate (7.5 percent) than any other sector of the performing arts.



Funding from the NEA still sends a strong signal to other funders, as well as to grant recipients themselves: “How much better can you feel about your work than to know that smart, informed peers recognized it in this way?” says Baker. But the dollar amount has never been more than a modest percentage of a company’s operating budget, and that percentage has diminished, too. Although Congress has increased NEA funding since the drastic cuts of the mid-1990s, 40 percent of its appropriation still goes to state and regional agencies for regranting at their discretion.

The sting of those cuts was still fresh in 1997 when Wayne Brown arrived at the NEA. “Our task was to create significant work with limited resources,” he says. “We tried to work carefully and strategically on what truly mattered to make as much impact as possible.” As Patrick Smith and Robert Marx did in the 1980s, Brown discerned what mattered by listening carefully to leaders in the field and to companies all over the country to understand “what would make a

difference to an organization’s vitality.”

Brown, who now serves as president and CEO of Michigan Opera Theatre, says the agency’s responsibility “is not to represent the field, but to be in touch with the field.” OPERA America follows a parallel objective. The two organizations don’t set an agenda, says Marc Scorca. “We are in sync to support the discovery of the future direction of American opera in 125 opera company laboratories.”

Then the time comes to talk about what’s learned in those laboratories — at NEA panels, conferences, forums and symposia. Scorca, Brown and Baker agree convenings are critical to fulfilling the NEA’s mandate. Looking ahead to the NEA’s next 50 years, Brown urges the opera field “to find a way to keep the level of convening alive, because it allows for a range of perspectives to have a place at the table.” These observations “shine a bright light on all aspects of the field,” Baker adds. They “illuminate how best to support the exciting work that is taking place.”

The Arts and Humanities Act, the founding legislation of the NEA signed

by President Johnson in 1969, included a Declaration of Purpose affirming government’s role in supporting artistic expression in our democracy: “While no government can call a great artist or scholar into existence, it is necessary and appropriate for the federal government to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination and inquiry but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent.” In its first 50 years, despite limited resources, the NEA has fostered a climate for substantial growth in American opera through productive partnerships, strategic grantmaking and steadfast conviction — its own way of demonstrating what President Obama describes as the “stubborn insistence” in the American spirit. ●

*Don Lee is a writer and radio/podcast producer based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. At NPR in Washington, D.C., he was executive producer of Performance Today.*

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A photograph of an audience member in the foreground, seen from behind, looking towards a stage. The stage is lit with warm, golden lights, and a performer is visible in the distance. The overall atmosphere is that of a high-quality theatrical performance.

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“snowbird” audiences, particularly when it comes to attendance at the opening production of its mainstage season. To stabilize and grow attendance, the company used its 2014 Getty grant to enhance its marketing campaign to the Latino community, which it had already been courting through a partnership with Univision fostered by the previous Getty grant it received in 2013. By opening its 2014–2015 mainstage Tucson and Phoenix seasons with *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, the company yielded an 18 percent increase in ticket sales from the first production of the previous season, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and a 38 percent increase over *Lucia di Lammermoor* the season before. Nearly a third of ticket buyers for *Cruzar*, a total of 2,673 individuals, were new to the company. The company had to retrofit its subscription packages to accommodate the demand from newcomers to attend subsequent productions during the season.

The Getty grant also allowed Arizona Opera to broaden its base of attendance at community events, nurture community partnerships, leverage additional funding and reveal the potential of mass media and targeted marketing: An investment of \$8,000 in a single ad for *Cruzar* yielded \$24,000 in sales, while a targeted direct-mail campaign reaped \$55,000 in sales.

Los Angeles Opera’s Newcomer Project was designed, according to its application, “to address issues of affordability, awareness and intimidation of the art form.” Informational programs, special events and discounted ticket packages at up to 20 percent off base prices were promoted via traditional and new media channels. The company’s final report revealed that while attendance at pre-performance lectures was lower than expected (website information proved sufficient for those who preferred to dine beforehand), the Newcomer launch party exceeded expectations with attendance by 354 people. Two of the three Newcomer after-parties were attended by more than 100 audience members. A total of 168 Newcomer subscription packages were sold, for a total of 526 tickets, including additional single-ticket sales. According to its final report, the company was “pleasantly surprised to see an interest in the program from those who had purchased single tickets in previous seasons but were looking to deepen their experience with and learn more about opera with fellow beginners.”

An assessment of organizational learning is also part of the grant

### **Variations in results are healthy indicators of risk-taking in any research and development venture**

program’s reporting requirements, and several companies reported positive results. Christopher Milligan, managing director and chief marketing officer of **CINCINNATI OPERA**, says the company’s Getty-supported Opera Express project achieved its primary objective of building a theater mounted on a truck that serves as a traveling venue for high-intensity opera performances. “By far the biggest challenge was the creation of the portable venue itself,” he says, but underlying that initiative was an organization-building collaboration of multiple stakeholders, from management and artistic leadership to production staff and union crews. The company’s volunteer guild acted as beta testers and Whole Foods Market contributed the use of its parking lot.

Says Milligan, “It was a cultural lesson in what your leadership will embrace in terms of allowing failure and experimentation. You learn the limits of your resources and the need for the entire team to respect what every discipline brings to the table. You learn to problem-solve together, especially when there is adversity.”

Milligan also sees ancillary value in telling the story of The Opera Express, perhaps through a documentary video. “We think the program has potential to deliver results in terms of offering intensive experiences for live audiences,” he says, “but just as important is to tell the story of how an opera company is reaching out.”

Media attention can be a consolation prize when the program itself didn’t quite work. According to Doug Tuck, director of marketing for Vancouver Opera, there were bumps along the way in Transporting Opera Audiences. Logistics with outlying venues and with transit authorities proved more challenging than expected, and there were concerns regarding the integration of Western cultural values in Asian communities. Redemption rates for opera ticket vouchers were low. But, says Tuck: “We had to do something revolutionary to reach those communities, and we managed to get a lot of media attention beyond the normal course of events. We raised awareness of the ease of getting into town, and it spurred us to imagine what we could do by partnering with a large organization, such as a transportation provider, and how we could present ourselves to a greater

number of people in the metro area.”

Now entering its 86<sup>th</sup> season, Central City Opera has been deeply challenged by the aging of its audience, which until a few years ago was skewing to the mid-70s. Multiple initiatives proved costly and ineffective, including a significant investment in young professionals that instead yielded the enthusiastic participation of baby boomers, demographically defined as those between ages 50 and 65. Says Director of Marketing Valerie Hamlin, “Clearly those were the people we needed to target.” Denver, some 40 miles east, was a logical market to mine for boomer audiences, but the interstate that connects it to Central City is a constant tangle of traffic.

To lure baby boomers from Denver, they knew they had to offer an enhanced transportation experience. “Baby boomers want to be on a party bus,” says Hamlin, “and they don’t want to go alone.” From a gift basket (with a split of champagne) on board presentations about the production, to backstage tours on arrival, Hamlin says the Getty-funded Boomer Bus program “became an experience and a deeper engagement.” The pilot program sold out, though it missed its demographic mark: Attendees skewed more toward the 60 to 70 range, rather than the 50 to 65 cohort the company had hoped for.

Hamlin says the program has grown and the company has leveraged that success into a partnership with Boomers Leading Change, an organization dedicated to recruiting volunteers. And it has partnered with the City of Central to make the Boomer Bus part of Central City Days, a local historical celebration.

**FLORIDA GRAND OPERA** also included a transportation feature in its Getty application for Opera in Hialeah, an engagement with that city’s Latino community. Ridership on a bus for opera attendees was lower than expected, but it was a minor failure in the entire scheme of the initiative, which included literacy programs in libraries, adult education and marketing for FGO mainstage productions. “It was true audience development,” says General Director and CEO Susan Danis. “We engaged the community from the beginning. And we had buy-in at the mayor’s level in a town that is served by a government that really touches its citizens.”

And then there was the project that didn’t make it to the finish line. **AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS’** StageNote app, which received a 2013 Getty grant, was halted before completion. According to AOP Producing Director Matt Gray, discovery, planning and design were completed for what the company hoped would be a



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“virtual coffee shop” in which audiences could interact, but when the company became fully aware of the additional time, resources and funding required, the project was shut down. Says Gray, “We had a great idea — we still think it’s a great idea that can be used in the performing arts community — but the oversight was not something we could maintain.”

Switching gears is not unusual for AOP, which is known in the opera industry as a “development” company that nurtures new opera from inception to performance, and Gray says innovation is fully supported by the board: “They like us to take chances, to be innovative, to be ahead of the game in finding new ways to reach audiences, to entertain, to connect. A lot of times projects or programs fade out because we don’t have the mechanism in place for long-term sustainability. That’s fine. We enjoy changing.”

Getty consultant Mark Hernandez says the foundation understands that, as with all forms of risk capital, there will be investments that do not succeed. Citing Getty Foundation Director Lisa Delan, he says: “Failure is an option. But not taking a risk is not an option. We want to see projects that are risk-taking.”

## Measures of Potential

Wisconsin’s Madison Opera attracts some 14,000 people each year to its free Opera in the Park concert, an evening of vocalists and ensembles performing opera excerpts. But the company has been vexed in its attempts to lure these audiences into the opera house. With its 2013 Building Opera Audiences grant, the company enlisted the help of the

University of Wisconsin Survey Center to scientifically sample Opera in the Park audiences and identify programs that might encourage conversion to ticket purchases. The UW Survey Center engaged a team of two professional supervisors and 20 field interviewers, devising a strategic map of the park to ensure a representative sample of attendees. The results were not shocking, says General Director Kathryn Smith, but they were highly informative. Free lunchtime brown-bag opera recital? No interest across all age groups. A reasonable ticket price for opera? Most interviewees suggested a number higher than the company’s existing price points. Lack of opera knowledge emerged as a common refrain.

“It allowed us to find out information that we didn’t have,” says Smith. “And it allowed us to make intelligent choices going forward.” Among those was the creation of the company’s Opera Novice program, a one-hour event that provides insight and background on upcoming productions, from *Tosca* to *Dead Man Walking*. The program has become a fixture of the company’s adult education program, with attendance — including new and familiar faces — far exceeding expectations.

Opera Philadelphia used its 2014 Getty grant to support the second phase of a consumer research study that assessed the values and behaviors of current, lapsed and potential audiences. The first phase emphasized qualitative research, yielding rich information in behavioral splits between “buffs” and “attendees.” Phase II delved deeper into the categories with quantitative analysis derived from 2,000 respondents to an online

survey. Opera Philadelphia Managing Director Annie Burrige says the Getty grant enabled Opera Philadelphia to “go beyond demographics to the revelatory component.” The grant, she says, took the company from “knowing what people like” to “knowing what people are likely to buy, under which circumstances and in what combination.”

The study directly affected near-term strategies for advertising and customer service, as well as long-term strategies for programming. The company is now in the process of launching a new dual-cluster format, comprising *O*, a 12-day urban festival of opera at multiple venues, and a more traditional winter/spring season at the Academy of Music and the Perelman Theater.

OPERA America’s support ultimately became part of a broader funding partnership for Opera Philadelphia’s market research. Prior to the Getty grant, the initiative was supported by The Barra Foundation. With the success of Phase II, additional support was provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage and The Wallace Foundation.

## Why the Money Matters

Patricia Kiernan Johnson, OPERA America’s director of marketing and communications, administers the application and adjudication process. According to Johnson, the grants are based on applicants’ merits alone, regardless of a company’s size or whether it has previously received a Building Opera Audiences grant. “The panel responds best to proposals that are truly innovative, and it raises the bar each year,” she says. “But applicants must also

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demonstrate a clear model for learning, both for themselves and for the field.”

In each of the past four years, the panels have awarded the annual pool of \$300,000 to as many or as few applicants as they deem appropriate. The number of applicants has ranged from 49 to 67 each year, with the number of grants per year ranging from 7 to 13.

**“It was a cultural lesson in what your leadership will embrace in terms of allowing failure and experimentation.”**

As a percentage of a company’s overall operating expenses, the grants are often miniscule, but as a percentage of a project’s budget, they can be profound. An award to a Level 1 company (defined by OPERA America as having operating expenses over \$10 million) constituted 0.03 percent of its annual budget but 42 percent of the project budget. An award to a Level 4 company (defined by OPERA America as having a budget under \$1 million) constituted 5 percent of its annual budget but 88 percent of its project budget. The median percentage of grant to operating budget for all awards is 1.57, but after extracting outliers, the mode is less than 1 percent. As a percentage of project budgets, the median and modes of grant awards (net of outliers) match at approximately 40 percent.

The marketing value of a Getty grant exceeds the monetary value. Arizona Opera Marketing Director Laura Schairer speaks for many of her colleagues in observing that the power of a Getty grant is in allowing discretionary investments: “When you have to make ticket sales goals, you put your chips on the warhorses. It’s a much easier sell. When you are trying to sell something new to new audiences you have to ask ‘How much can you risk?’ The Getty grant enabled us to do projects without taking resources from what we normally do. In terms of enabling us to put on a new work, it’s not significant. To use it for marketing was huge.”

## Stickyness

**H**ernandez says the Getty Foundation has reasonable expectations of how and when the portfolio of investments in opera audiences will see a return. A project that generates new audience members and retains them for two years might be measureable, but beyond that horizon, results are less predictable. At three years, he believes, technology alters the entertainment landscape, including opera. At five years, planning becomes prognostication. "Nobody can see that far," he says.

Ultimately, Building Opera Audiences has less to do with opera and more to do with behavioral modification: enticing those with potential interest in the genre away from entertainment alternatives, including television, gaming and alternative cultural experiences. Says Hernandez, "How do we socialize people to want a collective experience — to want to sit quietly in a dark room together?" And even with accurate reporting, it will require longitudinal analysis to determine whether audiences lured by Getty grants will prove to be sustainable.

"Opera companies have always had to work hard to fill seats," says Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. And while Scorca is confident that the Building Opera Audiences program can truly bolster audiences, he says its success must also be measured by the cultivation of opera marketing itself, not unlike OPERA America's cultivation of repertoire. "Successful opera marketing is a combination of knowledge, skill, experience, imagination, artistry and luck. As for luck, there's not much we can do. As for the rest, there is always work to be done." ●

**Matthew Sigman** is editor of *Opera America Magazine*.

A frequent contributor to *Opera News*, *American Theatre* and *Chorus America*, he is a three-time winner of the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award for Music Journalism. He received an M.B.A. from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

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# MY FIRST OPERA

BY PAULINE  
VAILLANCOURT

*In recognition of Opera Conference 2016, to take place May 18 to 21 in Montreal, we present this article in both English and French.*

I was born in Northern Quebec in 1945 in a region called the Saguenay, far away from the major cultural centers. I was lucky to grow up in a family that loved the arts and, more particularly, classical music and theater. My parents were therefore very supportive when I spontaneously decided, at the age of five, that I wanted to become a vocal artist. After a few childhood appearances on radio and television (which had only recently made its way to Quebec in 1952), I realized that I felt at ease performing, and I never regretted my choice of a career in music.

In 1965, at the age of 20, I entered the Conservatoire de musique du Québec in Quebec City. The director then was the internationally renowned Quebecois tenor Raoul Jobin. At the time, as was the case in many institutions, the obligatory courses, outside of singing and music theory, were limited to the study of languages and the history of music. But because I was hungry to get to the heart of music, I was given a dispensation to attend classes on harmony, counterpoint and analysis with, among others, the great Quebecois composer Gilles Tremblay, who opened for me the door to the music of our time. I thus developed a desire to find original works that had been rarely, if ever, sung, and I left for Montreal to witness the beginnings of the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ), led by the composer Serge Garant. What I heard onstage enchanted me, and the idea of working on new music became more and more clear. This was the music that I wanted to sing.

The theme of the 1967 World's Fair in Montreal, known as Expo 67, was "Man and His World." It opened in April with an extraordinary lineup of orchestras and opera companies from around the world. But at age 22, living in a precarious financial situation with a four-month-old baby, I never managed to set foot on the site of "Man and His World," and I missed the opportunity to take advantage of its incredible programming. But my brother, Jean-Eudes, a pianist and conductor, urged me to attend at least one musical event, and he suggested

that we both attend a master class with the Quebecois tenor and Mozart expert Léopold Simoneau, who, with his wife, the soprano Pierrette Alarie, traveled the world as lauded opera performers.

On the same day I was also able to attend my first opera: *Elektra*, performed by the Vienna State Opera, with Birgit Nilsson as Elektra and Leonie Rysanek as Chrysothemis. It was directed by Wieland Wagner and conducted by Karl Böhm. "Devastating perfection," my brother remembers thinking, when I recently reminded him of the event. "Power" is the word that would sum up my memories of the performance: the powerful music of Strauss, a composer for whom I would always have a penchant in my repertoire; the power, beauty and strength of the voices; and the power of the performance, which, to my surprise, could even evoke the expression of extreme violence. This *Elektra*, combined with meeting Léopold Simoneau, meant that over the course of one day I received a masterful education in opera.

As I returned to my studies, Simoneau presided over a committee with a mandate to present a strategy for the "organization and the development of an action plan for the creation of a state theater dedicated, in part or in whole, to the lyric arts." An institution under the name of the Opéra du Québec (not to be confused with the present-day Corporation de l'Opéra de Québec) would see the light of day four years later. Meanwhile, I joined opera choruses to become part of a world that I

had only previously glimpsed. My greatest memory of that time was hiding behind the curtains to be as close as possible to the action when the incredible Quebecois baritone Louis Quilico sang the Tonio's prologue to *Pagliacci*. It was a feast for my senses. He wasn't playing Tonio; he was Tonio.

That same year, at the Concours Final d'Interprétation du Conservatoire, I chose to sing a piece which at the time was rarely sung, Poulenc's *La voix humaine*. This 40-minute monologue, with long passages sung without musical accompaniment, was my first real incursion into the world of opera as a soloist.

And yet, surprisingly, I did not want to be an opera singer. At that time, a soloist was confined to a limited number of roles or to becoming a member of a troupe. I wanted much more. If, during my 26 years as a soloist in the worlds of both classical and contemporary music, you had told me that I would one day be a founding member of a company whose primary mandate is the creation of new forms of opera, I would have found that pretty funny. But it has all come full circle. From childhood to today, I have been inspired by singing, theater and creation. I finally found a method of expression that has defined me the most: the creation of new opera. ●

**Pauline Vaillancourt** is the artistic and general director of Montreal's *Chants Libres*. This essay was translated from French to English by Henry Gauthier.



Chants Libres' *Chants du Capricorne* by Giacinto Scelsi, with Marie-Annick Béliveau (Capricorn). Designed and directed by Pauline Vaillancourt.



# MON PREMIER OPÉRA

PAR PAULINE  
VAILLANCOURT

À l'occasion du congrès Opéra 2016, qui aura lieu du 18 au 21 mai à Montréal, nous présentons cet article en anglais et en français.

**J**e suis née au nord du Québec en 1945 dans une région très éloignée des grands centres culturels, le Saguenay. J'ai eu la chance de naître dans une famille qui aimait les arts et tout particulièrement la musique classique et le théâtre. Mes parents m'ont donc encouragée très jeune, dès mes 5 ans, dans mon désir spontané de devenir une musicienne grâce à ma voix. Toute jeune, après quelques apparitions à la radio et à la télévision (qui commençait à peine à apparaître au Québec en 1952), j'ai su que je m'y sentais à l'aise et jamais je n'ai douté de mon choix.

En 1965, à 20 ans, j'entre au Conservatoire de musique du Québec à Québec. Le directeur est alors le grand ténor québécois de réputation internationale Raoul Jobin. Comme dans beaucoup d'institutions, les cours obligatoires exigés des chanteurs se limitent à cette époque, en dehors des cours de chant et de solfège, à l'étude des langues et à l'histoire de la musique. Mais comme j'ai soif de m'approcher un peu plus du cœur de la musique, on m'accorde une dérogation pour assister à des cours d'harmonie, de contrepoint et d'analyse musicale avec entre autre, un de nos grands compositeurs québécois Gilles Tremblay, qui m'ouvre les portes de la musique de notre temps. Je développe alors mon goût pour la recherche d'œuvres originales peu ou pas chantées et je pars pour quelques excursions à Montréal assister aux débuts de la Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (SMCQ) sous la direction du compositeur Serge Garant. Ce que j'entends sur scène me ravi et l'idée d'aborder des œuvres nouvelles semble se préciser de plus en plus. Voilà ce que je veux chanter.

En 1967 l'Exposition Universelle s'ouvre à Montréal sous le thème Terre des Hommes avec une extraordinaire programmation d'orchestres et de maisons d'opéra venant du monde entier. À 22 ans, vivant dans une situation



YVES DUBÉ

financière très précaire et avec un enfant de 4 mois, je ne peux rien voir de l'Exposition Internationale, ne met jamais les pieds sur le site de Terre des Hommes, et manque toutes les occasions de profiter de l'étonnante programmation. Mais mon frère Jean-Eudes, pianiste et chef d'orchestre, m'encourage à assister à au moins un évènement musical, et suggère de m'accompagner pour une classe de maître avec le ténor mozartien québécois Léopold Simoneau qui, avec sa femme, la soprano Pierrette Alarie, parcourent le monde en tant que grands chanteurs lyriques.

Durant cette même journée, je choisis d'aller entendre mon premier opéra : *Elektra*, par l'Opéra d'Etat de Vienne, avec Birgit Nilsson dans le rôle d'Electra et Leonie Rysanek dans celui de Chrysothemis, mis en scène par Wieland Wagner sous la direction de Karl Böhm. Quelque chose !! L'Épouvante parfaite... se souvient mon frère, à qui je rappelle récemment cet évènement marquant. Puissance résumerait mon souvenir. Je suis frappée de plein fouet. Puissance de la musique de Richard Strauss, compositeur qui restera dans mes choix de prédilection de répertoire; Puissance, beauté et pouvoir de la voix; Puissance du jeu théâtral qui, à ma surprise, peut aller jusqu'à l'expression extrême de la violence. Combiné à ma rencontre avec Léopold Simoneau, je reçois dans cette unique journée un cours magistral de

l'art lyrique de scène.

De retour à mes études, j'apprends que Simoneau préside un comité chargé de présenter un programme «d'organisation et de mise en marche d'un théâtre d'Etat voué en tout ou en partie au théâtre lyrique», société qui verra le jour 4 ans plus tard sous le nom Opéra du Québec. (Ne pas confondre avec la maison d'opéra actuelle qui se nomme Corporation de l'Opéra de Québec).

Je m'inscris dans les chœurs d'opéra pour me rapprocher de ce monde à peine entrevu. Mon plus grand souvenir est d'entendre, cachée dans les rideaux de scène pour être le plus près possible de l'action, l'immense baryton québécois Louis Quilico chantant le Prologue de *Pagliacci*. Je me régalais. Il ne jouait pas Tonio, il était Tonio.

La même année, j'inscris à mon concert du Concours Final d'Interprétation du Conservatoire une œuvre rarement chantée *La voix humaine* de Francis Poulenc. Ce monologue de 40 minutes, avec de longs passages de chant sans accompagnement musical, est alors ma première vraie incursion dans le monde de l'opéra en tant que soliste.

Etonnamment, je ne voulais pas être un chanteur d'opéra. A cette époque, les solistes étaient confinés à jouer quelques rôles répétés à l'infini, ou à faire partie d'une troupe. En fait, je voulais ça et beaucoup plus. Si on m'avait dit qu'un jour lointain et durant 26 ans, après une carrière de soliste tant dans le monde lyrique que dans celui de la création contemporaine, je serais membre fondateur d'une compagnie lyrique dont le mandat premier est de créer de nouvelles formes d'opéras, je l'aurais trouvé bien drôle. Mais la boucle s'est refermée d'elle-même: de mon enfance à aujourd'hui, j'ai été influencé par le chant, le théâtre et la création. J'ai donc finalement trouvé l'expression qui me définissait le plus: la création d'opéra. ●

**Pauline Vaillancourt** est la directrice générale et artistique de Chants Libres à Montréal. Cet article a été traduit du français à l'anglais par Henry Gauthier.

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