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ON THE COVER: Catherine Miller as Thanatos and Joëlle Harvey as Eurydice in New York City Opera's production of Telemann's *Orpheus*, directed by Rebecca Taichman with set and costume designs by David Zinn and lighting by Donald Holder. Photo by Carol Rosegg.



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LYRIC OPERA
KANSAS CITY



This month, over 500 members and colleagues from across the opera world will gather in Philadelphia for *Opera Conference 2012: Creative Resurgence*.

It is interesting to reflect on the progress of the field from the depths of concern in 2008 about the impact of the economic crisis to a new level of innovation that is fueling opera's creative resurgence today. In recent letters, I've reported on successful new works, productions in alternative venues and exciting performances of the opera masterpieces. Opera companies are testing strategies to attract new audiences, engage patrons and extend the civic importance of opera and opera companies. Together we will learn more about these and other initiatives in the course of the conference.

Audience development continues to be a top priority for every opera company. Gone are the days, however, when mailing more subscription brochures resulted in larger audiences. Marketing professionals now work to blend traditional marketing and public relations efforts with the reach of social media. At the same time, everyone is seeking new ideas that respond to changing audience behaviors in a crowded arts and entertainment marketplace. Discussion about the need for increased experimentation was the focus of the first meeting of OPERA America's new Strategy Committee in February. Thanks to the generosity of the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, OPERA America will inaugurate a new granting program this year that will enable us to support and learn from model projects and experimental audience development initiatives designed and implemented by our members. Watch for announcements about a new Marketing Forum and grant guidelines this fall.

Despite our progress, a recent board meeting of the Performing Arts Alliance in Washington, D.C., reminded us that a number of challenges still confront the arts and larger nonprofit sector. Arts agency budgets continue to face cuts, and proposals for tax reform could reduce or even eliminate the deductibility of charitable contributions. Simply building audiences is not enough. Working together, we have to forge a new definition of a healthy opera company that includes measurement of community connections and public perception. We must find new ways to communicate our value to policy makers and the general public through programs that draw on the inherent strength of the art form to reach across cultural, educational and social barriers, not just inside the walls of our theaters, but across the communities we call home.

The annual conference gives us a chance to reflect on our work over the past year. More importantly, it provides us with a forum in which we can envision a bold course of action for the future. I look forward to seeing members in Philadelphia and to sharing the results of our work with those who were not able to join us.

Sincerely yours,

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

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO



Minnesota Opera's world premiere production of *Silent Night* (Kevin Puts/Mark Campbell). Photo by Michal Daniel.

SILENT NIGHT WINS PULITZER PRIZE

Silent Night, by composer Kevin Puts and librettist Mark Campbell, was awarded the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for music. Commissioned by Minnesota Opera, where it opened in November 2011, *Silent Night* will have its second run at Opera Company of Philadelphia in February 2013.

Based on the 2005 film *Joyeux Noël*, the opera's quadrilingual libretto tells the story of a temporary truce during World War II. Defying their superiors, soldiers cross enemy lines on Christmas Eve to celebrate the holiday and bury their dead. An audio recording of the entire opera is available online, with links at mnoopera.org, mpr.org and npr.org.

Silent Night received support through *The Opera Fund* in two separate funding cycles: a 2008 Repertoire Development Award of \$25,000 for the commission and first workshop, and a 2011 Repertoire Development Award of \$29,912 for an orchestral workshop held April 25-29, 2011. 🎶

ART AFTER THE DELUGE

When Tropical Storm Irene swept through the northeast in late August 2011, many areas of Vermont were devastated. While much of the physical damage has been repaired, the emotional aftermath lingers. In response, **Opera Theatre of Weston (OTW)** has announced a new production of *Noye's Fludde* by Benjamin Britten, scheduled for January 2013. The one-act opera, based on the biblical tale of Noah and his ark, deals with humankind's place in the world, its responsibility to care for it and the balance that must be achieved to sustain it.

A total of 32 children will appear in various roles. This summer, the children's chorus will help create their own masks during a workshop at the studio of OTW costume designer Robin D'Arcy Fox. In addition, *Noye's Fludde* Music Director Angela Gooch will spend time with the children on the music, and choreographer Ashley Hensel-Browning will put the chorus through their first steps. Resident percussionist Anne D'Olivo will train four young students to play an array of percussion instruments.

OTW staff will work with teachers and therapists to help young people from around the state share their own experiences of the flood. During the process of learning about *Noye's Fludde*, they will create their own narrative arcs, some in poetry form. OTW choreographer Ashley Hensel-Browning will help the students transform their writings into creative movement responses. This integrative experience has been designed to enhance their appreciation of Noah's journey, as well as chart their own. 🌈



Evangeline Bullick auditions for Opera Theatre of Weston's production of Britten's *Noye's Fludde*. Photo courtesy of Opera Theatre of Weston.

CATHERINE AND TERRY FERGUSON RECEIVE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Earlier this year, OPERA America Ambassador Members **Catherine** and **Terry Ferguson** were the recipients of Nevada's 2012 **Governor's Arts Award**, which honors individuals who make a significant contribution to the state's quality of life, educational viability and economic vitality.

Terry Ferguson is a trustee of Opera Omaha and a member of OPERA America's National Trustee Forum; he also serves as president of the Nebraska Cultural Endowment and is a member of the boards of many Nebraska organizations. Catherine Ferguson, in addition to her service to the arts, is an accomplished artist who has achieved international recognition for her sculptural works. In 2008, Opera Omaha commissioned Catherine to design sets and costumes for the company's production of *Aida*.

"Catherine and Terry Ferguson are vital proponents of the arts in our community and the State of Nebraska; we are extremely fortunate to count them among the close members of the Opera Omaha family," says Roger Weitz, general director of Opera Omaha. "Catherine created a stunning design of *Aida* for the company's 50th anniversary, and Terry's service on the board of directors is exemplary. I am deeply appreciative of their advocacy, their support and their commitment to and love of opera." 🍷



Opera Omaha's production of Verdi's *Aida*. Photo by James Scholz.



Tobias Picker and Edgar Foster Daniels.

EDGAR FOSTER DANIELS CELEBRATES 80TH BIRTHDAY

On June 3, 2012, lifelong opera aficionado **Edgar Foster Daniels** celebrated his 80th birthday. Daniels saw his first opera at the age of five and went on to a successful performing career on Broadway and in film and television.

When his family, owners of North Carolina's News & Observer Publishing Company, sold their three newspapers, Daniels used his share of the proceeds to establish the Edgar Foster Daniels Foundation, which is dedicated to supporting the most important new opera productions and artists of our time. The Foundation has underwritten productions at The Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, The Santa Fe Opera and Washington National Opera. World premieres receiving major support from the Foundation include *The Great Gatsby*, *An American Tragedy* and *The Little Prince*.

In addition, Daniels has served on boards of Los Angeles Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera and The Santa Fe Opera, and is a lifetime board member of Lyric Opera of Chicago.

"Edgar Foster Daniels is rare among philanthropists," says Marc A. Scorca. "He is a generous patron of many of the nation's leading opera companies and has underwritten innumerable new works and other exciting artistic projects. The vitality of American opera today is a tribute to his vision and deeply appreciated generosity. OPERA America is honored to salute him on the occasion of his 80th birthday." 🍷

OPERA AMERICA recognizes that the health of opera companies depends in large measure on the strengths of their boards. In addition to periodically highlighting the contributions of trustees within their own communities, the national service organization presents the annual National Opera Trustee Recognition Award and provides opportunities for continuing education and networking through its National Trustee Forum. For more information on programming for trustees, contact Amanda Parker at AParker@operaamerica.org.

Arizona Opera is pleased to announce that **Ryan Taylor** is now director of artistic administration and **Mindy Riesenber**g is now director of marketing and external affairs. Taylor joins the company from Wolf Trap Opera Company in Vienna, VA, where for three years he served as manager of community development. During his tenure, he created the *Vocal Colors* recital series in partnership with The Phillips Collection, as well as *Behind the Curtain: Family Day at the Opera*, *Backstage Buzz*-moderated artist panels and *ROSTER* magazine. A baritone with a decade of performing experience and over 30 roles to his credit, Taylor previously worked as general director for the Berkshire Opera Company. Riesenber has directed the marketing departments at institutions including the San Diego Museum of Art, Kimbell Art Museum (Fort Worth, TX), Walters Art Museum (Baltimore, MD) and, most recently, at Phoenix Art Museum. She developed the *After Hours at the Kimbell* series and spearheaded the complete re-branding of the Walters Art Museum. At Phoenix Art Museum, Riesenber expanded the museum's social media presence, cultivated strong connections with Spanish-language media outlets and was instrumental in developing *Art Night Out*, a quarterly cocktail party intended to increase the profile of the museum among the gay community.

Austin Lyric Opera (ALO) announced the appointment of **Joseph Specter** as general director. Specter comes to ALO from the Metropolitan Opera, where he has served as director of institutional relations since 2010. Specter earned an artist diploma from Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts, and is a graduate of the double-degree program between

Tufts University and the New England Conservatory of Music. During his career as a singer, Specter performed more than 20 opera and musical theater roles with companies throughout the U.S. In 2009, Specter founded *Lucy's Brother*, a company that creates novel music publishing products, seeking to make opera accessible to a broader audience and to provide valuable tools to working singers and teachers. He named the company after Lucia's brother Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* — the first opera he ever saw and the first leading role he sang in his career.

Los Angeles Opera announced that **Christopher Koelsch** has been appointed president and CEO. Koelsch joined the company in 1997. He was named senior vice president and COO in 2010. In his current role, and prior to that as vice president for artistic planning, under the guidance of Plácido Domingo, he has helped produce over 30 new productions, including four world premieres, and seven television recordings including the two-time GRAMMY-winning *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Additionally, he has been responsible for all aspects of artistic and strategic planning, overseeing the company's music administration, production, marketing, public relations and educational administration.

Lyric Opera of Kansas City announced the appointment of **Deborah Sandler** as the company's new general director, effective July 1, 2012; Sandler has signed a five-year contract. She will assume her new role when General Director Evan Luskin, who served the company for 26 years, retires on June 30. Sandler currently is director of development and external affairs at the Kentucky

School of Art at Spalding University in Louisville. She previously was general director of Kentucky Opera and the general director of Opera Festival of New Jersey in Princeton. She developed extensive touring and residency educational programs for both opera companies.

Opera on the James in Lynchburg, VA, is pleased to announce the engagement of the company's first music director, **Douglas Kinney Frost**. Maestro Kinney Frost conducted Opera on James's production of *Madama Butterfly* in November 2011. Maestro Kinney Frost resides in Syracuse, NY, where he is music director of Syracuse Opera and is represented by Uzan International Artists.

Palm Beach Opera (PBO) announces the appointment of **Greg Hirsch** to the position of managing director. Hirsch previously served as director of production for the 2011-2012 season and has a history with the organization dating back to the 1970s. This appointment is part of ongoing efforts to put in place an organizational structure that allows for maximum efficiency while keeping the company as lean as possible in accordance with the company's multi-year strategic plan. His career includes nearly 400 productions divided between opera, theater and television. He has held positions at Portland Opera, San Diego Opera, The Dallas Opera and Tulsa Opera. As a lighting designer for opera and musical theater, Hirsch has received two Drama-Logue awards, and the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle and Emmy awards.

Pine Mountain Music Festival (MI) announces **Sandra Lewin** as its new executive director. Lewin has

served as director of community and donor relations at Omega House in Houghton and earlier as university development director for prospect management and research at Michigan Technological University. She also served as administrative assistant to the director of the J. Robert Van Pelt Library at Michigan Tech. Her community service includes volunteering on the boards of the Calumet Theatre, the Calumet Players and the Miscowaubik Club, and she has contributed to local theater as actress, singer, musician and backstage crew member.

Robert K. Meya has been appointed as **The Santa Fe Opera's** director of external affairs, a newly created position. Meya will focus on key fundraising initiatives and institutional advancement. A comprehensive strategic plan, completed in 2010, laid out a five-year forecast to insure the company's continued artistic and financial growth; Meya will oversee these efforts. Meya most recently served as director of development for New York City Opera, where he was responsible for an increase in annual giving from \$11 million to more than \$18 million in a time of the company's restructuring. He held positions in fundraising with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and San Francisco Opera. In 1999, he was an intern at The Santa Fe Opera. A graduate of Georgetown University with a B.S. in foreign service and master's degree in arts management from Carnegie Mellon University, Meya is a classical pianist.

Tacoma Opera announces the appointment of **Noel Koran** to the position of general director. He will be involved in all aspects of the

company's operations, including three mainstage productions per season and an active regional educational program. Koran comes to the company with a wide range of experience in vocal and theatrical performance, stage direction, arts management and education. Most recently, he served as the general director of Rogue Opera in Medford, OR, and as the director of performing arts at Southern Oregon University in Ashland, OR. Over the years, he also taught and directed opera for a number of major national universities, including the University of Washington, where he served as resident stage director for opera. Koran is a graduate of the University of Washington in Seattle, where he received a B.A. in drama. He received his D.M.A. with a specialization in opera and stage direction from the University of Texas in Austin.

Virginia Opera Association has announced the promotion of **Nancy Kritikos** to director of production. Kritikos joined Virginia Opera in January 2012 as company manager. She succeeds John Kennelly, who served as Virginia Opera's producing director for 12 years. Kritikos has more than 20 years of nonprofit leadership experience, including positions at Houston Grand Opera and Orlando Opera Company. A graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, she earned a B.F.A. with a focus on lighting design and scenic painting. Kritikos completed her master's course of study at the University of New Orleans with a concentration in lighting and set design. Additionally, the company named **Peter Mark** artistic director emeritus of the company. Mark served as artistic director, music director and principal conductor of Virginia Opera from 1975 until November 2010. He

also served as the company's first general director from 1975 until 2000.

Zizi Mueller has been appointed president of **Boosey & Hawkes**, overseeing the operations of the company's New York office. Mueller came to Boosey & Hawkes in 2008 after a career as a performer and producer of contemporary music. She produced several significant collaborations of multidisciplinary work, as well as first recordings of important chamber and orchestral works. She launched the Emerging Composers Initiative in 2008, which aims to foster and develop the next generation of innovative composers. Under her management, Boosey & Hawkes launched the Online Scores website, as well as sophisticated new media initiatives that will ensure that the company's publishing stays current in the ever-changing digital environment. Two additional staff appointments have also been announced: **Steven Lankenau** has been named senior director, promotion and **Dan Bartfield** has been named manager, new media. Since 2010, Lankenau has guided promotion strategies through North and South America, including such initiatives as the monthly Concerto Corner and Opera Spotlight repertoire campaigns. Prior to joining Boosey & Hawkes, Lankenau was director of programming at the Brooklyn Philharmonic, where he curated ASCAP award-winning seasons celebrated for genre-busting collaborations and Brooklyn-wide festivals. Bartfield joined Boosey & Hawkes in 2006. He has spearheaded multiple global marketing initiatives in the evolving digital marketplace, including the ground-up development of the Boosey & Hawkes Online Scores website. Bartfield now

implements a global media strategy for the company, including the administration of over 20 social media accounts, while also maintaining digital platforms for audio and visual content across the Boosey & Hawkes online networks.

Maestro **Daniel Lipton** has been appointed artistic director and conductor of **Opera Tampa**. Lipton succeeds Maestro Anton Coppola, who retired after 17 years as founding artistic director. Previously, Lipton was appointed music director and chief conductor of the Anhaltische Philharmonie and general music director of the opera company in Dessau, Germany. He became artistic director of Opera Ontario, and

presented the Canadian premieres of Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*, Verdi's *I Due Foscari* and Massenet's *Portrait de Manon*, among others. Previous posts include music director with Houston Grand Opera and artistic director of the San Antonio Festival. He has also held positions with the Zürich Opera, the Teatro Comunale in Bologna and Florence, American Ballet Theatre and the Denver Symphony Orchestra.

The Ordway Center for the Performing Arts announced the recipient of the 2011 Sally Ordway Irvine Awards of Commitment: **Kevin Smith**. Now in their 20th year, the Sally Awards honor extraordinary achievement in the visual, performing and literary

arts. Smith served as president and CEO of Minnesota Opera from 1986 to 2011, a period in which the company expanded its season from three to five productions, doubled its attendance and grew its annual budget from \$1.5 million to \$9 million. During his tenure, Minnesota Opera was recognized for artistic excellence, a commitment to the development of new works, an innovative approach to production design, a highly successful resident artist program, and progressive educational and community outreach programs. Smith is now OPERA America's field consultant, specializing in extended consultations with opera companies in transition. ☺

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IN MEMORIAM

Mark D. Flint passed away on March 4, 2012, a day before his 58th birthday, after a long illness, in Phoenix, AZ, where he was conducting *Aida*. For over 35 years, Maestro Flint led orchestras in world-renowned opera houses and symphonies throughout the U.S. and Canada. A native of Fairmont, WV, Maestro Flint was also strongly associated with Michigan Opera Theatre, Lake George Opera (now Opera Saratoga) and Augusta Opera in Georgia. In life and in his work, he performed with boldness, passion and love. He was a respected and devoted friend to every person he came in contact with including singers, directors, designers and opera administrators. One of the high points of his career was conducting the world premiere of David DiChiera and Bernard Uzan's opera *Cyran* in October 2007 at Michigan Opera Theatre and subsequently in 2011 at Florida Grand Opera. Other noted premieres included Ned Rorem and J.D. McClatchy's *Our Town* at Lake George Opera and the Canadian premiere of Tobias Picker and Gene Scheer's *Thérèse Raquin* at L'Opéra de Montréal. Maestro Flint, who lived in Leonia, NJ, is survived by his partner, Steven Horak, and his mother, Jeanne.

Edward Cobb Purrington, former artistic administrator of Washington National Opera (WNO) and artistic consultant to its Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, died on April 14, 2012, from complications of a protracted battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 82. From 1987 to 2001, he was artistic administrator for WNO and deeply involved with casting and scouting emerging talent. He also had a hand in shaping the contemporary repertory at WNO. He instituted the Look-In program, which introduces elementary school children to opera at the Opera House by way of a "backstage" look at an opera in production and a fully-staged musical excerpt with orchestra. He began his career in opera at The Santa Fe Opera in 1959 and worked there for 13 seasons in a variety of positions. At Santa Fe, he worked with composers Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, Gian Carlo Menotti and Krzysztof Penderecki. He left New Mexico to become the general director of Tulsa Opera in 1974, a position he held for the next 13 years until his departure for Washington. While in Tulsa, Purrington led the company through an expansion in diversity of repertory and style of production. A native of Holyoke, MA, he earned a B.A. from the University of Massachusetts and an M.A. from the School of Dramatic Arts at Columbia University. He is survived by his wife of 21 years, Lois Howard, as well as two sons from a previous marriage and their families: Christopher Purrington of Albuquerque, NM (and daughter-in-law Kristine and granddaughter Julia) and David Purrington of Rawlins, WY (and daughter-in-law Beverly and grandsons Joshua, Aaron, and Jacob). Other survivors include stepdaughter Jennifer Howard of Washington, D.C. (and son-in-law Mark Trainer and grandchildren Lela and Finn).

Maurice Sendak, a writer and illustrator of children's books, most famously *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), died on May 8, 2012. He was 83. In addition to his own stories, he also illustrated the works of Hans Christian Andersen and William Blake, among others. Later in his career, he became renowned as a designer of theatrical sets and costumes. With director Frank Corsaro, he created sets for operas, including *The Magic Flute* (Houston Grand Opera, 1980) and *The Cunning Little Vixen* (New York City Opera, 1981). In 2003, Sendak illustrated playwright Tony Kushner's text of Hans Krása's *Brundibár* (1938), an opera performed by child inmates of the Theresienstadt concentration camp. In 2006, Sendak collaborated with Kushner on a fully-staged version of *Brundibár* at the New Victory Theater in New York. Additionally, several of Sendak's books have been translated into staged productions: the operas *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* and *Where the Wild Things Are* by the British composer Oliver Knussen; and Carole King's *Really Rosie*, a musical version of *The Sign on Rosie's Door*, which appeared Off-Broadway in 1980 (and as an animated TV special in 1975). Sendak was born in Brooklyn on June 10, 1928. His companion of 50 years, developmental psychiatrist Eugene Glynn, died in 2007. No immediate family members of Sendak survive.



Talya Patrick, Jo Vincent Parks and Laura Bohn perform in Musical Traditions, Inc.'s world premiere of *Certitude and Joy* (Erling Wold). Photo by Lynne Rutter.



James Robinson, Michael Cristofer and Terrence Blanchard during a workshop for *Champion* (Blanchard). Photo courtesy of Opera Theater of Saint Louis.



Caitlyn Lynch in the world premiere production of *Dark Sisters* (Nico Muhly/Stephen Karam), co-produced by Gotham Chamber Opera, Music-Theatre Group and Opera Company of Philadelphia. Photo by Richard Termine.

THE OPERA FUND: REPERTOIRE DEVELOPMENT

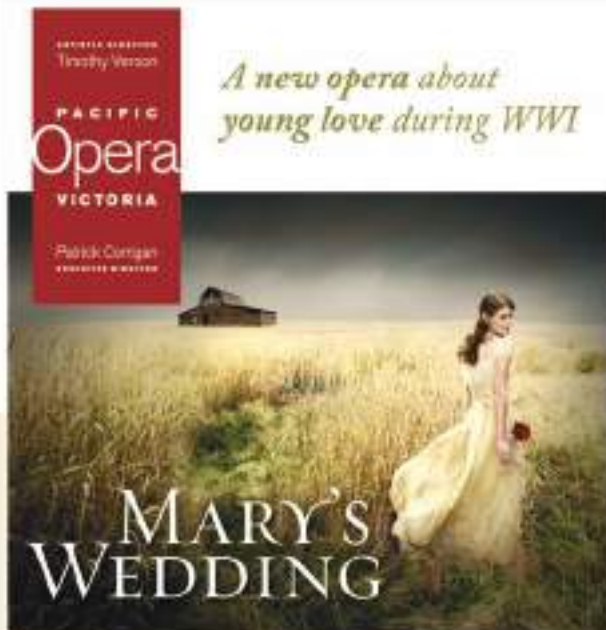
Intent to apply deadline: August 24, 2012 | Application deadline: October 8, 2012

Repertoire Development grants assist OPERA America Professional Company Members (PCMs) and their partners in meeting the special costs incurred by developing and producing new North American opera and music-theater. Grants may be used to offset creative fees, recording expenditures for evaluation and archival purposes or other costs associated with the development of a new opera/music-theater work, including but not limited to lab productions, workshops, readings and revisions. A company may apply as a sole applicant or as part of a consortium. OPERA America defines a consortium as a partnership between producing organizations that leverages a broader range of expertise and resources on behalf of a project and guarantees subsequent performances of the work beyond its initial production run. Guidelines will be available online at operaamerica.org/grants in July. For more information, contact Lyndsay Werking at LWerking@operaamerica.org.

THE ROBERT L.B. TOBIN DIRECTOR-DESIGNER SHOWCASE

Intent to apply deadline: August 24, 2012 | Application deadline: October 8, 2012

As part of a continuing effort to foster emerging opera artists, OPERA America is pleased to continue the bi-annual *Director-Designer Showcase*, made possible by the generosity of The Tobin Theatre Arts Fund. This program is intended to bring new talent to the forefront and connect promising directors and designers with those who are in a position to advance their careers. OPERA America will consider applications from director-driven teams of artists. Each team must create a production proposal for an opera, chosen from a curated list. The *Showcase* is open to emerging opera/theater artists, regardless of their membership status with OPERA America. Guidelines will be available online at operaamerica.org/grants in July. For more information, contact Lyndsay Werking at LWerking@operaamerica.org.



Music by Andrew R MacDonald

Libretto by Stephen Massicotte, based on his award winning play *Mary's Wedding*

In honour of the First World War Centennial, Pacific Opera Victoria and Edmonton Opera are bringing *Mary's Wedding* back to the stage in 2014.

Premiered November 2011, *Mary's Wedding* is a love letter to the power of memory and innocence, and to a generation caught in the crucible of war. It explores the lasting power of love, shifting from past to present, from the prairies to the battlefields of Europe.

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Video clips, historical background, and more are on-line: www.pov.bc.ca/maryswedding.html

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<http://music.cbc.ca/9/Saturday-Afternoon-at-the-Opera>

Seeking partners and presenters.

For further information contact Ian Rye, Director Artistic Administration, 250.382.1641 or iryepov@pov.bc.ca

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YOUNG FRIENDS OF OPERA: A SNAPSHOT

Through its Young Friends of Opera program, OPERA America has connected opera company young patron (YP) groups for several years, providing a forum for organizers to gain new ideas for their programs. Recently several groups expressed a desire to learn more about how other groups are structured and run. In response, OPERA America deployed a detailed survey in March 2012. A total of 27 opera companies participated in the survey; most were currently running a YP group, while several others were in the planning or restructuring stages. The survey covered a wide range of topics, such as whether stated age ranges were enforced and the goals for the group.

One set of questions explored definitions of success, as well as perceived keys or hindrances to success. Criteria for success included:

- "Thriving membership, great fundraising, well attended events. Fully committed volunteers."
- "25 percent become ticket buyers and/or donors."
- "Retention of current members and a growing new member base. Members that 'age out' continue to attend the opera even without the discount."

Those organizations that defined their groups as successful were asked for the keys to their success, resulting in responses like:

- "...keeping it organized and integrated with the company's larger mission."
- "Continues to bring in younger and newer audiences who would not come otherwise, creates word-of-mouth about the company and individual productions."
- "...collaborating with other organizations" such as the city's art museum.
- "A dedicated staff person, committed volunteer board..."

Groups that felt that their programs were unsuccessful primarily pointed to lack of staff time, inability to engage members beyond a small core group and lack of organizational support.

Professional Company Members, whether planning or currently running a YP group, are encouraged to join OPERA America's Young Friends of Opera program. Contact Patricia Kiernan Johnson, marketing & media manager, at PKJohnson@operaamerica.org for details and to join the listserv. A summary of the YP group survey is also available to Professional Company Members by contacting Kiernan Johnson. ☺

An Excellence Manifesto for the Digital Age

By Douglas McLennan

1. Excellence is Meaningless

Excellence doesn't stand out when everything is excellent. In a world where "all the women are strong, all the men are good looking and all the children are above average," being good looking, strong and above average won't get you noticed. We perceive excellence when it stands out from the things around it. When everything is excellent then excellence is average. It's in our nature to want more, to want different. Most declarations of excellence aren't about excellence at all; they're about positioning. In the digital age, when ideas and bits and bytes are cheap and endlessly reproducible, excellence is a mutable concept.

2. The Mushy Middle No More

Success in the mass culture was measured not by excellence of product but by size of audience. That doesn't mean mass culture wasn't excellent; only that the essential measure of its excellence was audience. Mass culture was built on the idea of producing things that would appeal to the most people. That usually didn't mean the high end; it meant generic and accessible. Generic is the "mushy middle" — something that is least offensive to the most people. If there are only three channels and you want to watch then you have to pick one of the three. The communications revolution is killing the mushy middle. Generic can't compete with infinite customization. We want what we want when we want it, and increasingly, how we want it. The good news? The arts were never the generic mushy middle (Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons notwithstanding). Something to consider though: Would you be producing what you're producing now if you weren't the only opera company in town? If you had 10 or 20 opera competitors and your audience could customize its experiences?


3. The Good-Enough Problem

MP3s suck. The sound quality is worse than the most indifferently-recorded CDs. Yet most of us happily listen to MP3s, content to give up sound quality for the convenience and portability of digital files. Likewise phones. If 50 years ago you had asked AT&T engineers what the most important feature of their phone service was, they would have said it was reliability and sound quality. Turns out it wasn't. We put up with dropped calls and crappy sound because portability is more important. In both cases industry leaders defined the essential qualities of excellence differently than did their customers. So why do consumers not only settle for products less excellent than they can be, but often prefer them? It's called the good-enough problem. Something doesn't have to be definitively excellent to be successful; it merely needs to be good enough at the thing consumers most care about. The excellence is in matching what matters most with the ability to deliver it. How does this translate in the arts? Do our audiences care more about the evenness of a voice across registers or how convincing a singer's acting is? A provocative story or well-crafted music? Famous performers or lavish sets? Comfortable seats or unique experience? It's not always about trade-offs and, sure, we want everything to be excellent. But unless we can identify what the essential good-enough is and deliver, excellence in everything else might not matter, no matter how much we want it to.

4. Choice is the New Excellence

We care about excellence when it delivers something we value. The question, then, is what do we value? The communications revolution pushes overwhelming choice on us, and we're constantly weighing the value propositions in those choices. Choosing is complicated and difficult and exhausting. The New Excellence is that which speaks to the values in the choices we're trying to make. Now, Excellence — by whatever definition — is nowadays assumed. To be anything other than excellent means to be discarded. What changes is my definition of excellence. Don't tell me your new production of *Nixon in China* is excellent and expect me to rush on over. Just saying something is excellent doesn't help me decide. Excellence of a production (whatever that is) is just one part of the decision process for most people. It's not about shoveling out more YouTube videos and press releases and tweets; that's just adding to the information jungle and you could be making it harder to choose, not easier. You're excellent if you make choosing easier, if you articulate value in ways that make it easy for me to decide.

5. No, Community is the New Excellence

Every arts organization in America is talking about engagement. The old definition of audience engagement? You make something and I respond. But social networking has changed expectations. We're in the Sharing Economy, and my attention and recommendation are currency, worth more the more I share. It isn't just call and response — it's about interacting, give and take. Sharing and interaction are now an essential part of the cultural experience for many people. A meaningful experience is not complete until there's an opportunity to share it. Sharing has become a creative act, and how people curate what they share is a way in which people help define themselves. Sharing means I've decided to invest in what I find meaningful. So: the value of new-definition engagement is not so much to get feedback as it is the ability to tap into the creative energy of a community. Yeah, yeah, sounds good, you say. Artists are supposed to lead, not follow. But art doesn't really get its power until an audience decides to do something with it, to translate it, play with it, spread the word and reinterpret it. The web makes this possible with unprecedented efficiency. And it makes art better. For all the talk about inclusiveness and outreach, the arts are actually behind forward-thinking businesses in this regard. American business has discovered that customers aren't just a market, they can help do things a company can't do on its own. A mobilized community can make a company better — more excellent — than it can be by itself. 

Douglas McLennan is the founder and editor of ArtsJournal, one of the first websites to aggregate arts and cultural news from around the world. He will deliver the Opening Keynote of Opera Conference 2012.

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Creative Resurgence: A Sampler

By Kelley Rourke

"For years businesses have been focused on 'operational effectiveness,' but you can't shrink your way to greatness," says Allen R. Freedman. "In order to reposition you have to engage in a series of activities which are pretty diverse but which create an offering in the mind of the consumer that is differentiated. You try a bunch of stuff. You wind up not doing some things and doing others, emphasizing the ones that create a distinctive advantage." Freedman, a private equity investor since the 1970s, has been chairman of the board of three publicly traded companies. A current member of OPERA America's board of directors, Freedman also served as interim executive director of Glimmerglass Opera from 2005-2006.

For traditional arts organizations struggling to find their footing in a fast-changing world, operational effectiveness can sound like a worthy enough goal. But some of today's most successful opera companies are those that are experimenting with new programming, new venues and new ways of relating to their communities. These innovations may complement existing programming, replace it or transform it.

All the World's a Stage

Opera is an art form typically associated with a particular kind of venue, but many are challenging the notion that all opera should take place in the opera house. At **Opera Company of Philadelphia**, the

company has developed two distinct product lines: Opera at the Academy features three large-scale works at the company's traditional performance venue, while Opera at the Perelman offers two edgier works, produced in collaboration with the Curtis Institute of Music, in a more intimate space. In 2013, **Boston Lyric Opera** will present its fourth "Opera Annex" production, *Clemency* (James McMillan/Michael Symmons Roberts), at the Artists For Humanity EpiCenter. Next year, **Los Angeles Opera** will launch "LA Opera Off Grand" with the world premiere of *Dulce Rosa* (Lee Holdridge/Richard Sparks) at The Broad Stage. All of these new efforts allow companies to increase — or at least maintain — the number of offerings to the public in a time of tight budgets; in addition to potentially drawing a broader audience, these alternate models offer the possibility of containing costs. **The Dallas Opera's** (TDO) new chamber opera series, inaugurated earlier this year with a production of *The Lighthouse* (Peter Maxwell Davies), was announced on the heels of a temporary reduction in the number of mainstage productions.

Smaller-scale productions can have a number of positive effects, including providing fertile ground for new partnerships. According to TDO General Director Keith Cerny, "By committing ourselves to [the chamber opera series] and forging a landmark collaboration with Kevin Moriarty and the Dallas Theater Center... The Dallas Opera hopes to instill new excitement

and a fresh spirit of collaboration and innovation into this, and every upcoming season." **Lyric Opera of Chicago** is also in the planning stages of a new initiative, "Lyric Unlimited," intended to broaden and deepen the cultural service provided to communities throughout the area.

Not every excursion outside the opera house is an exercise in thinking small. TDO is one of numerous companies that has experimented with simulcasts in recent seasons. This year, for the first time, TDO took its simulcast outside the art district. The Cowboys Stadium showing of *The Magic Flute* drew approximately 15,000 attendees, 92 percent of which had no previous purchasing history with TDO.

Welcome to Our Home

In Nashville and Indianapolis, the resident opera company's acquisition of a new home has resulted in a permanent "alternative" venue. **Indianapolis Opera's** Basile Opera Center is home to a series of public master classes, educational offerings and small-scale productions, including a recent double bill of *Bon Appetit!* (Lee Hoiby) and *A Waterbird Talk* (Dominick Argento). "When people sit two feet in front of the stage, it turns into a whole different art form," says Artistic Director Jim Caraher. "People say they feel like they're in the opera. The audience seems to be younger, more of a theater crowd. The space opens up a whole world of repertory that we couldn't do in our big theater:

Bob Orth and I had talked about doing *Waterbird* for going on 25 years. We're now looking at everything from Handel to some small Broadway shows." There are other benefits, as well: shows in the Basile Center run for up to nine performances (compared with two for mainstage), allowing time for buzz to build in the community. In addition, says Caraher, "We're able to be a little bit more personal with the audience during intermission, to really work the crowd."

Nashville Opera's Noah Liff Opera Center offers a similar opportunity for the company to present more adventurous repertoire, including an upcoming production of *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* (David Lang/Mac Wellman). The Liff Center, which opened in 2009, also provides the company with an additional stream of revenue, as other groups and individuals book the space for events.

As an added bonus, according to Director of Sales & Marketing Reed Hummel, some people who have visited the space for an event have become interested in learning more about the opera. Renovations are still underway on portions of the Basile Center, but Caraher expects that it, too, will see increasing demands for rentals. This additional income will ultimately allow both organizations to further enhance their artistic offerings.



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“It became clear that everyone could get more by cooperating than by going it alone.”

For nearly two decades, **Minnesota Opera** had a troubled relationship with the Ordway Center, which houses its main performance venue, as well as with the other tenants of the space (The Schubert Club and The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra). “There was not enough time on the calendar, and there was not a large enough endowment to make the rent affordable,” says Patrick Dewane, a long-time employee of Minnesota Opera.

“Early on, there was an assumption that the problems between the organizations were personality driven,” says Dewane. “But it was not about personality. It was about time and money.” When ongoing squabbles led The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra to consider building its own home, community leaders sprang into action, pulling the four organizations together to study and solve the problem. “It was sort of like an intervention.”

The solution at which the groups arrived — the Arts Partnership — is a separate nonprofit made of the staff and board leadership of the Ordway, The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, The Schubert Club and Minnesota Opera.

The Arts Partnership is about two-thirds of the way through a \$75 million campaign to fund renovation of the complex and create an endowment that provides rent subsidies to each partner. “The endowment is the glue that holds everything together,” says Dewane, who is now campaign director for the Arts Partnership. “As long as you abide by the user agreement document, which we all negotiated and signed together, you get your portion of the endowment draw.”

To complete the solution, the organizations came up with the idea to replace an underused 300-seat proscenium theater in the Ordway with a 1,100-seat concert hall. “This allowed The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra to move out of the Music Theater, where the opera performs, freeing up more tech time for the opera,” says Dewane. “At the same time, the orchestra will get an acoustically outstanding concert hall that is tailor made for their needs, without the challenges of running a building. The Ordway will be able to present more world music and dance, and expand its education programs. The Schubert Club has more dates available and a second venue. And the many professional music groups in the Twin Cities will have a first class venue in which to perform.”

The additional time was key to the success of Minnesota Opera’s groundbreaking New Works Initiative. “We probably couldn’t have done *Silent Night* before the Partnership,” says Artistic Director Dale Johnson, referring to the company’s Pulitzer Prize-winning commission of 2011. “The score was very complicated. The set was very complicated. We were able to essentially have two weeks in the theater, which enabled us to really hear and see the piece. The care and feeding of a new work is very special. You can’t really fit it into the same box as you would a *Bohème*. You have to have time for it to grow.”

According to Dewane, the Partnership functions more like a law firm than a typical landlord-tenant arrangement. “The Ordway holds title to the hall, but the presidency of the Partnership rotates every year among the four organizations.” The president oversees the capital campaign and construction project; if there are issues of usage, the president convenes a meeting to discuss them.

Another key component of the Partnership is a master calendar/scheduling agreement, which has resulted in guaranteed dates for all users of the Ordway. Previously, users of the building were under pressure to adjust their seasons to accommodate lucrative touring shows coming through town. With the new agreement, says Minnesota Opera Marketing & Communications Director Lani Willis, “Nobody got exactly what they wanted, but everyone got what they needed.” Touring shows are now programmed in the “white space” around the resident groups’ seasons.

Since the creation of the Arts Partnership, there has been complete turnover of leadership at the four organizations, and the Partnership remains strong, according to Dewane. “I think it is a model for success in changing times. This is a solution easily understood by our donors and others in the community. We are dealing with each other like a family figuring out how to share a summer home we all love. “

“It is a solution that came after over two decades of bickering,” says Willis. “As an employee of one of the organizations involved, I have seen the Arts Partnership transform not just the scheduling discussions, but the big-picture thinking of the future, the conversations among leadership, and relationships at all levels of the staffs of each organization. It would be hard to imagine, coming into any of our organizations today, that there was ever any rancor. I cannot overstate that the Arts Partnership has had a transformative effect.”

Sometimes, Less is More

When Austin Lyric Opera (ALO) opened the Armstrong Community Music School, the company was proud to expand its services to include not only opera education, but also childhood music education, individual music instruction and other community programs. However, given a tightening budget, says Artistic Director Richard Buckley, "Right now we need to focus on putting the best product on the stage." To that end, the company recently sold the building that once housed both the music school and the opera offices, securing a solid financial foundation to support future opera seasons and opera education programs. The Armstrong Community Music School, meanwhile, has become an independent nonprofit organization that will continue to serve the Austin community.

Spinning off an enterprise at the margins of a company's mission is one thing; cutting back on mainstage productions is another. The Dallas Opera is one of several companies that has temporarily adjusted its season in response to recent economic challenges, but the company's open, positive tone as it announced "a careful, multi-year plan to balance and stabilize company finances as rapidly and prudently as possible" resulted in an outpouring of support from the community, including multi-year commitments from a new "general director's circle" totaling more than \$8.2 million.

All in the Timing

A little less than a decade ago, **Fort Worth Opera** made the transition to a festival format. Earlier this year, **Opera Theater of Pittsburgh** announced a new summer festival schedule, **SummerFest**, intended, similarly, to distinguish itself from Pittsburgh Opera, the other player in town. (For more on these two festivals, see article on page 35.)

While a compressed format can have many advantages, there's also something to be said for spreading productions through the year. **Chicago Opera Theater (COT)**, which for the past three seasons has performed its operas back-to-back, is returning to a stagione format for 2012-2013. "We felt like COT was missing out a little bit by performing in such a short time frame," says Andreas Mitisek, general director designate of COT. "We didn't have enough contact with our audience through the year. From a marketing standpoint, at first it looks like you would save money by putting everything together in a festival, but it can be harder to get people to go to two operas in a short time frame. We also had reduced time to get with the papers and create a buzz." Mitisek sees new artistic potential, as well: "The staff here has done an incredible job mounting two shows at once, but if you focus on one thing it is always better than trying to focus on two things."



“You get really good at cutting corners... but you can't do that indefinitely.”

On July 1, 2011, **Washington National Opera** (WNO) became affiliated with The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. “The National Symphony Orchestra did this 20 years ago, Very Special Arts more recently. To some extent these gave us affiliation models to follow, but to some extent we are charting our own path,” says Michael Mael, executive director of WNO. While the artistic department of the opera was left largely intact, the opera company’s administrative functions are now being handled by the Kennedy Center.

“We had always stayed within budget on the expense side, but raising the money was the problem,” says Director of Artistic Operations Christina Scheppelmann. Faced with a tough economy, she says, the company made the tough decision to reduce the number of productions rather than produce at a lower standard. “I said, we have to maintain quality, or we will lose our audience.”

The affiliation offers some distinct advantages when it comes to attracting new audience members, according to Mael. “When the Kennedy Center buys ads in the *Washington Post*, we are included. We are able to formally co-market: Next year, our *Showboat* will be sold as part of the Center’s theater series.” Similarly, WNO has benefited from the Center’s base of donors: “If you look at the invitation for the opera ball, there are half a dozen major sponsors who are long-time Kennedy Center donors but had never, until now, been involved with the opera ball.”

“The Kennedy Center has given us the financial stability that allows us to look forward, to make commitments five years in advance with the certainty that the funds will be available,” says Mael. As a result, the company’s first *Ring Cycle* — which had been cancelled due to financial constraints — is back on the books.

WNO will also begin producing a holiday opera in the Center’s intimate Terrace Theater. The new initiative will begin modestly, with a revival of an existing production of *Hansel and Gretel*, but Scheppelmann looks forward to commissioning new holiday operas in future seasons.

That’s not the only commission on the horizon for the company as part of its new American Works Project. WNO recently chose three young composer/librettist teams to be mentored by experienced artists as they write 20-minute operas. This project will benefit from the Kennedy Center’s existing relationships with major conservatories across the U.S. In addition, the company plans to annually commission an emerging composer/librettist team to write a one-hour piece based on a contemporary American story, staged by a young American director.

WNO’s educational offerings — old and new — will benefit from being brought under the umbrella of the Kennedy Center, says Mael. “Most of our core programs, like Kids Create Original Opera, continue to be supported, and the Kennedy Center education department has broader reach into D.C. public schools than we did.”

Even in the most challenging seasons, notes Mael, “The company did extraordinary things with almost no resources — there was an *esprit de corps*, a real sense of teamwork. However, he continues, “you can get really good at cutting corners in a way that doesn’t affect quality, but you burn people out. You can’t do that indefinitely.”

“We spent a lot of time thinking about what the affiliation could and should look like,” says Mael. “I created a list of issues that would have to be addressed and we spent a lot of time, in advance, figuring out how to address them. As a result, from day one, we were able to focus not on those issues, but on problems we hadn’t anticipated. I think many people are surprised that the integration has gone as smoothly as it has. There have been some relatively modest challenges, most of which have to do with adjusting to new systems, new policies. But overall it feels very natural.”

Scheppelmann agrees: “I am working with more colleagues, getting to know my colleagues better and intensifying relationships. It has been interesting to expand on that existing dialogue and have a closer relationship with my colleagues in development, PR and marketing. The Kennedy Center has excellent people in all departments, and to be able to work with them more closely is wonderful and positive all around.”

More than the Sum of Parts

Collaborations are at the heart of many innovations — whether collaborations with other opera companies, with other arts organizations or with other local institutions. **Houston Grand Opera's** HGOco embeds its commitment to collaboration in its name: the “co” stands for company, community and collaboration, according to HGOco Director Sandra Bernhard. HGOco has worked with a mind-boggling array of individual community members and partner organizations to create 10 new works, including *The Refuge* (Christopher Theofanidis/Leah Lax) and the Mariachi opera *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* (José “Pepe” Martínez/Leonard Foglia).

Every commissioning organization has a different set of criteria when green-lighting an idea for a new opera. For HGOco, the local angle is most important: All works begin with stories of Houstonians. “Our stories are purposely local because we are here, making an investment in our community,” says Bernhard. “But *Cruzar* is not a story about one border. I spoke to a man after one show who came from Pakistan to work in the energy corridor, and it was his story, too.” The opera’s universal appeal was underlined when it was booked for Châtelet (Paris); it will travel next to San Diego.

While Bernhard is thrilled to see HGOco commissions find acceptance elsewhere, she feels the question of whether a story “has legs” isn’t necessarily the right one. “The right question is, do you want to invest in developing the next voice that is going to have something relevant to say? Not everything is going to last. You have to take that risk. Our goal is to be relevant and to be a cultural resource in our community.”

Many companies with young artist programs are able to extend their reach into the community as they create performance opportunities for emerging singers. But these programs are not always sustainable within the structure of an opera company: “Austin Lyric Opera has gone through its ups and downs, and one of the victims a few years back was the young artist program,” says Buckley, who feels that it can be difficult for regional companies to provide the training and experience young singers need.

Recently, though, Buckley has established an alliance with **University of Texas at Austin** (UT), one of the largest research universities in the U.S. “What the university alliance can provide is something that benefits the singer and benefits us.” The first fruits of the collaboration will be *The Pagliacci Project*, an interactive performance that will play in locations around town. And while ALO mainstage auditions have always been open to UT students, Buckley has recently committed to hiring UT singers for specified roles in upcoming seasons. (Student roles next year include Barbarina and Antonio in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Wagner in *Faust*.) In 2015, UT students will take a substantial number of roles in the opera’s spring mainstage production. “This will replace the spring opera produced by the school,” says Buckley. “We will bring in major singers for the lead roles, and the students will have a real performance experience at a different level. Besides benefiting the opera students, it will free up the university’s orchestra and facility to allow them to do something different in the spring.” In all cases, the students will receive academic credit for their participation.

Not all collaborations are local. Mitisek, who officially takes the reins at Chicago Opera Theater this fall, is also artistic and general director of

Long Beach Opera, a company with a similar artistic profile. He envisions a particularly intimate co-production model, in which an entire show, including cast, would have a run that begins in one city and concludes in the other. In addition to making more efficient use of rehearsal time and scenery budgets at each company, Mitisek believes this model will be attractive to artists: “We do so many works that are not common. Now, singers learning a new role will get to perform it seven times instead of three. I think it is also more interesting for designers to have their works seen in two parts of the country.”

It's Who You Know

Freedman points out that successful new businesses today are not as dependent on long-standing corporate culture; companies are small, nimble and networked. “Think about Instagram, which just sold to Facebook for \$1 billion. It was 10 or 11 guys hanging around Palo Alto in bicycle shorts. But when there was a problem, they were able to make a midnight phone call to someone they met at a party and get help. I think there is a parallel in the idea of the Forums that OPERA America is creating. The more you can do that, the better it is for the art.”

An opera company is not a start-up; bike shorts are still not considered appropriate attire at most, and 501(c)(3) organizations have certain limitations on their ability to “try a bunch of stuff.” But just as today’s artists are pushing the boundaries of a 400-year-old art form, so are company leaders reconsidering what it means to be cultural service providers within their communities. At *Opera Conference 2012* and other convenings throughout the year, OPERA America looks forward to continuing the conversation. 🌸

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Tobias Picker

Dolores Claiborne

San Francisco Opera, September 15, 2013

Commissioned by the San Francisco Opera, Tobias Picker's thrilling setting of Stephen King's bestselling novel "Dolores Claiborne", with a libretto by J.D. McClatchy, premieres in 2013.

Douglas J. Cuomo

Doubt

Minnesota Opera, January 26, 2013

Composer Douglas J. Cuomo and librettist John Patrick Shanley create an opera based on Shanley's Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play, commissioned by the Minnesota Opera for its 50th anniversary season.



Jörg Widmann

Babylon

Bayerische Staatsoper, October 27, 2012

Widmann's forceful new work, with a libretto by Peter Sloterdijk, tells the story of Babylon and the creation of modern time through the romantic entanglement between a priestess and an exiled Jew.



George Benjamin

Written on Skin

Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, July 7, 2012

Benjamin's new opera is commissioned by the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, the Nederlandse Opera Amsterdam, the Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden London, and the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, with an original libretto by Martin Crimp, librettist of Benjamin's previous *Into the Little Hill*.



Gerald Barry

The Importance of Being Earnest

Los Angeles Philharmonic, April 7, 2011

Gerald Barry's strikingly original interpretation of Oscar Wilde's classic story, with a libretto by the composer, premiered at the Los Angeles Philharmonic in April 2011 and made its way to the Barbican, which co-commissioned the work, in April 2012.



Also recently premiered:

Toshio Hosokawa, *Matsukaze, La Monnaie* (Brussels), May 3, 2011

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After years of careful planning, the National Opera Center will open its doors for business in September. A number of OPERA America members already have booked time in the Center for auditions, rehearsals, workshops and a variety of meetings and special events, including Boston Lyric Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Gotham Chamber Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Music Academy of the West, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, William Matheus Sullivan Musical Foundation and Wolf Trap Opera. Visit operaamerica.org/operacenter to learn more about making reservations. 📍



Photos by Jeff McCrum.

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

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

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OPERA America's New Works Forum at the National Opera Center

November 7-12, 2012

In fall 2011, 63 individuals attended OPERA America's first New Works Forum, which brought together opera producers, publishers, composers and librettists to explore organizational and artistic collaboration, address specific barriers to success and develop strategies to increase the number and quality of new works in the field at large.

*"One of the great things for me was the chance to meet and hear from those directly involved in the creation process... It was very valuable to expand my circle of personal relationships with composers and librettists, especially with young creators previously unknown to me."
— David Hamilton, Fargo-Morehead Opera*

Building on that success, OPERA America will convene the second **New Works Forum**, November 7-10, 2012, in the brand-new **National Opera Center** in New York. The 2012 New Works Forum will again feature facilitated discussion, presentation of case studies and live showcase performances. These events will all be held at the National Opera Center, OPERA America's custom-designed new headquarters, currently under construction in midtown Manhattan and scheduled to open in September 2012. Taking advantage of the Opera Center's state-of-the-art technological capabilities, several Forum sessions will be streamed live in HD to attendees in other cities.

*"I was impressed to see so much thinking outside the box, especially in the differing ways that projects germinate."
— Mark Streshinsky, West Edge Opera*

New for 2012, OPERA America is collaborating with **New York City Opera's** dynamic VOX program, a workshop for new American operatic works. VOX gives American composers and audiences the opportunity to hear professional performances of excerpts of new operatic works as read by members of the New York City Opera orchestra and soloists.

In late 2011, OPERA America convened an independent panel to select promising new works for performance at the *New Works Sampler*, to be held as part of *Opera Conference 2012* this summer in Philadelphia, as well as for the subsequent New Works Forum. Members of the panel, which included Cori

Ellison, dramaturg; Susanne Mentzer, mezzo-soprano; and Stewart Wallace, composer, selected the following works for the New Works Forum:

- *All Wounds Bleed* by Christopher Cerrone and Tony Asaro, supported by American Lyric Theater
- *Heart of Darkness* by Tarik O'Regan and Tom Phillips, published by G. Schirmer, Inc./AMP
- *Dr. Sun Yat-sen* by Huang Ruo, represented by Latitude 45 Arts Promotion, Inc.
- *The Golden Gate* by Conrad Cummings, supported by American Opera Projects

Other performances and events will be announced at a later date.


OPERA America's commitment to the successful development of new North American operas is a longstanding one. Other OPERA America programs currently in place to encourage the development of new works include:

- The *Salon Series*, intimate performances of works by distinguished North American composers and librettists
- New Works Exploration Grants, which provide support for administrators to attend performances of North American operas, to strengthen relationships between companies interested in pursuing the creation and production of new works
- The *New Works Sampler*, a showcase of works-in-progress and recent premieres at OPERA America's annual conference; The North American Works Directory, an online hub for information about North American opera and music-theater works
- *The Opera Fund*, which since 1984 has awarded nearly \$11 million to encourage the creation, presentation and enjoyment of North American works

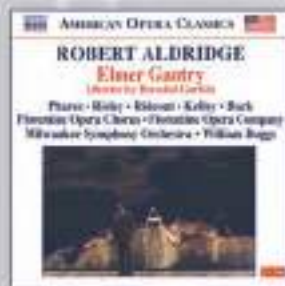
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Come to the Party

Summer Festivals Work to Expand Their Reach

A condensed period of cultural programming — whether two days or two months — can create a sense of occasion that is inviting to both opera aficionados and newcomers. Some festival opera companies draw an international audience, while others are more locally based. Regardless of how they define their core audience, summer festivals continue to experiment with new strategies to drum up the crowds. At the same time, each company is attentive to the distinctive characteristics that have drawn audience members over the years. These calling cards range from a particular artistic sensibility to hometown pride, from genteel hospitality to an array of themed programming.

Pine Mountain Music Festival: Strong Grassroots Support

Pine Mountain Music Festival, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, draws its audiences from a 100- to 200-mile radius, according to Artistic Director Joshua Major. "We are very remote — eight hours directly north of Chicago — but we have really strong grassroots support. There are a lot of people who may not necessarily like opera or even classical music, but they support the festival because of what it does for the community." The Upper Peninsula, or U.P., makes up 29 percent of the state's land mass but is home to only three percent of the state's population.

"It is a very authentic place. There is no pretension. People don't show up for any reason but to hear the music, and if they don't like something, they'll tell me: 'I thought the second piece was terrible!' I like that. I think it's really important to have that authentic connection with your audience." The audience has a large Finnish contingent, which means "it never hurts to program a Sibelius symphony," says Major. The

community's fierce cultural pride was an important factor in the success of the *Rockland* (Jukka Linkola/Jussi Tapola), based on a true story from the Finnish mining community, which premiered in 2011 and will return in 2013.

The roster of artists engaged for the festival is an important selling point, but PMMF's audience is more interested in community than bold-faced names. "If we were to bring in someone we consider to be a big star, no one would know who that person is," says Major. On the other hand, the members of the Bergonzi String Quartet, which has been in residence for the last 15 years, are well-loved local celebrities. "They go for a walk downtown and everyone wants to say hello." This summer, Major hopes to create even more community connections via a new series called UPstarts, featuring talented young musicians from the Upper Peninsula.

Opera Saratoga: Part of a Great Cultural Region

"Saratoga is the center of the horseracing world for six weeks in the summer," says Opera Saratoga General & Artistic Director Curtis Tucker. "I think half of Kentucky comes here." But there is not much opportunity for the opera company to capitalize on this influx of tourists, because the opera season is over before the races begin. "One of the reasons we don't perform during the season is that everything gets more expensive; housing triples during the season, and we have to accommodate 100 people." While this might seem like a missed opportunity, Tucker notes that a number of other arts events take place during the track season and says, "I'm not sure the people coming for the races comprise a major part of the audience for any of these events."



Jorge Garza as Ferrando and Andrew Garland as Guglielmo in Opera Saratoga's production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Photo by Gary Gold.

"I think we need to focus instead on people coming to the larger area for culture," says Tucker. "You can make your way from here to Tanglewood, to Glimmerglass, to Bard College. We are part of a great cultural region in the summertime." The company is resident in Sarasota Spa State Park, which in the summer is administered by the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (SPAC). "We complete SPAC's classical series," says Tucker. SPAC contracts with independent producers for chamber and jazz festivals, and the Philadelphia Orchestra and New York City Ballet are each resident for part of the season. Opera Saratoga is the only true resident organization, says Tucker. "Working with SPAC is the main way we extend our reach: They are much larger and their online and print reach goes well beyond ours."

Opera Theater SummerFest: The New Festival on the Block

"Everything this company has known is changing," says Scott Timm, who became general manager of Opera Theater of Pittsburgh at the end of 2011. One of the most significant changes is its move from year-round performance to a festival format, branded as Opera Theater SummerFest. "Pittsburgh has a really rich cultural calendar, which means it is harder for smaller companies to get noticed. We started looking at other American cities that have a major symphony, and we realized we were the only one without a summer festival. We decided we would fill that niche in Pittsburgh."

One thing that will contribute to the formerly itinerant company's identity is a new home. "Our SummerFest home is the campus of Shadyside Academy, a private school in Fox Chapel. It has rolling hills, mature oak trees, the classic academic setting of an open quad surrounded by neo-Georgian classroom and dormitory buildings. There is also a relatively new performing arts center, with both a proscenium stage and a black box theater."

In an attempt to entice Pittsburgh families to cross the bridge to Fox Chapel, mainstage repertory for the first SummerFest (*The Magic Flute*, *Candide* and *Carmen*) was selected with broad appeal in mind. But even though the titles are familiar, says Artistic Director Jonathan Eaton, the all-new productions

will still have a distinctive Opera Theater style. Eaton is particularly looking forward to the company's take on *Carmen*, a slimmed-down story with flamenco onstage and an accordion in the pit. Eaton also notes that his is one of the few companies that still performs in English: "I feel that, particularly with comic rep, it needs to be in the language of the audience."

In addition, a set of commissions adds the edge that long-time audience members have come to expect. Six new 15-minute operas, under the collective title *Night Caps*, will be offered following mainstage performances. The six operas, with libretti by Rob Handel and music by Daron Hagen, Gilda



Anna Singer, who will appear in the recurring role of Miss Darlington in Opera Theater SummerFest's upcoming productions of the six *Night Caps* mini-operas. Photo by Patti Brahim.

Lyons, Roger Zahab, Eric Moe, Dwayne Fulton and Alberto Demestres, will also be offered on one program at the end of the season. In addition to stage shows, SummerFest will offer programming on the quadrangle, to include everything from cabaret to belly dancing, with food available for picnics and plenty of activities for kids.

Timm hopes that people from nearby cities can be enticed to travel to the area to take advantage of some of Pittsburgh's other great cultural attractions, such as the Warhol Museum and Fallingwater. A five-day Mozart Camp has been designed with these cultural tourists in mind: it will include lectures and films, in addition to performances of seldom-heard songs and chamber works by Mozart.

The Refestivalization of Central City Opera

Two years ago, Central City Opera (CCO) hired EMC Arts to meet with the staff, board and community members and consider the company's future. "Our subscriptions were dwindling and ticket buyers were literally dying," says Valerie Hamlin, director of marketing. "Everything was on the table, from shutting down to moving to Denver. We decided we needed to expand our offerings. We had someone come and say, 'There are some operas here, but where is the festival?'"

Last year's SinFest was created to complement a mainstage production of *Seven Deadly Sins*. The company joined with other organizations and individual artists — from the ballet company to slam poets — to give audience members a progressive experience of the seven sins explored in Weill's opera. This year, to support its productions of *The Medium* and *The Turn of The Screw*, CCO has created The Paranormal Project, which, in addition to films and performances, will include an investigation of the historic Teller House with The OtherSide investigators. Upon arrival, event guests will be greeted by the ghost of Billy Hamilton, the hotel's famous Scottish caretaker, and then be invited to explore the Teller House with the paranormal investigation team. Before the hunt, OtherSide will hold a Ghost Hunting 101 session to introduce attendees to the equipment used to detect paranormal activity, such as night vision goggles, electromagnetic field detectors and motion detectors.



Ballet Nouveau Colorado performing DiSINtegration during Central City Opera's SinFest. A photography exhibit on the sins is visible in the background. Photo by Erin Swank.

Many people visit Central City and the surrounding area to gamble, and while the opera company maintains a friendly relationship with the casinos, Hamlin doesn't see much of an opportunity for audience growth here. "The people who go to the opera will throw some money in a slot machine occasionally, but for the most part the people who come for the casinos are not interested in the opera."

CCO has also experimented with bringing opera down from the mountaintop. Last year, the company brought *Carmen* to a 9,000-seat venue in Denver typically used for concerts. "We sold 3,000 seats and it rained cats and dogs," says Hamlin. "We learned that probably wasn't the best venue for us, but I still think bringing a production to Denver is a great tool. A whole lot of people came who, for whatever reason, couldn't come to Central City. This year we will bring *Oklahoma!* to Denver, with two performances in an 800-seat indoor venue, which should work much better."

Fort Worth Opera: The Thing to do in May

In 2007, Fort Worth Opera (FWO) introduced a festival format, in part as a way to better complement, rather than compete with, nearby Dallas Opera. According to Joy Partain, director of public relations, the move has been successful on many fronts: "There's a buzz now that I didn't feel before. The whole city gets excited about the festival. Opera is not just one of the things you can do in May, it is *the* thing to do in May."

Still, opera doesn't sell itself, and the Fort Worth team works throughout the year to draw tourists and locals. "Last year, about 10 percent of our audience came



Amon Carter Museum of American Art's director Andrew Walker and Darren K. Woods, general director of Fort Worth Opera, at a *Lysistrata* preview event. Photo by Naomi Vaughan.

from out of town," says Partain. Cultural tourists, who booked 1,900 hotel room nights during last summer's festival, come not only for the opera but for the town's three museums: Amon Carter Museum, Kimbell Art Museum and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. FWO works with these museums to build its local audience, as well. This season, Mark Adamo anticipated a production of his *Lysistrata* with a discussion about women in conflict at the Amon Carter Museum, while Jake Heggie and three cast members from *Three Decembers* (libretto by Gene Scheer, based on a story by Terrence McNally) appeared at the Modern Art Museum.

This year, the company launched "Opera Shots," a series of quarterly gatherings in local bars and restaurants featuring members of the chorus and studio singers in repertoire of their choice. "We invited people who bought tickets once but have not returned," says Partain. "We didn't want it to be a hard sell event. There is no subscription table. We wanted to create a safe haven for people to reconnect with why they liked opera, without shoving a subscription down their throat." At the most recent event, FWO created coasters with a promotional code to add a little gentle encouragement for people to go home and buy tickets. "These events are packed. We choose trendy places that have just been open a few years. The bars love it because they get people

in on a Tuesday or Wednesday. The singers love having an audience. It's a win-win."

Reviving a Pioneering Spirit in Des Moines

Robert Larsen not only founded Des Moines Metro Opera (DMMO), he conducted and directed every production for the company's first 37 seasons. "It's pretty remarkable," says Michael Egel, who two years ago took over the role of artistic director. Although the company had begun considering a succession plan for some time, due to health concerns the transition happened much more quickly than anticipated. "With about six months' notice," says Egel, the company scrambled to hire stage directors and conductors to cover the 2010 season.

"We had anticipated more of a phase out, but then all of sudden we went from being a complete anomaly to being like a lot of other companies. As artistic director, I am establishing, for the first time, a pattern of working with guest conductors and directors."

The transition in leadership was accompanied by a major facility renovation. "A new day for Des Moines Metro Opera has begun," says Egel. "For me, the challenge of delivering that message following an extraordinarily popular founder was made easier when our audience members could drive up to the building and enter the theater through a whole new façade."



Des Moines Metro Opera's production of Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Photo by Duane Tinkey.



Pre-performance picnics in the gardens at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Photo by Ken Howard and courtesy of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

In addition to bringing in new creative artists, Egel is committed to broadening DMMO's repertory: "The company had a pioneering spirit in its first decades – we opened in 1973 with a season of *Albert Herring*, *La Rondine* and a double bill of *The Medium/Prima Donna*. A summer festival in the middle of Iowa is not going to play on a national scale doing *Bohème* and *Traviata*. Each season I want us to do one piece that is a company premiere. *Eugene Onegin*, which we will produce this summer, is not exactly a rarity, but it is new for us." Egel is also planning to add a series of performances in an alternate venue.

"We've won a number of 'best kept secret' awards," says Egel. "I kept coming across these plaques and trophies. *The New York Times* did a feature on summer festivals that said, 'Don't tell anyone, but Des Moines has great opera.' I want to change that. We should not be a secret."

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis: Building a Habit

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (OTSL) is a festival for which people travel: the audience comes from 45-47 states, as well as nine or 10 different countries. "Because the opera company itself is a national destination," says Joe Gfaller, director of marketing and public relations, "we are on the front doorstep for people to experience St. Louis. To that end we make sure, when engaging with out of town visitors, that we are giving them access to the full range of opportunities

that make St. Louis an exciting place to be. We want to get them to develop the habit of returning to St. Louis."

Out-of-town ticket buyers receive discounted admission to local cultural institutions, which include a world-class botanical garden, the second-most visited zoo in the country and three art museums. OTSL also works closely with a number of hotels. "St. Louis is a city of neighborhoods," says Gfaller, "and we can help guide you to a hotel in the right neighborhood for you, whether you are interested in boutique shopping, great Italian food or the downtown tourist destinations."

The company also works to create a habit-forming atmosphere on its own campus. "We consider hospitality to be our brand," says General Director Tim O'Leary. "We strive to be welcoming not only for the people traveling from out of town but the audience who comes from St. Louis. Richard Gaddes had the idea to create a festival company with adventurous repertory that had a Glyndebourne image in terms of the sense of occasion created by the garden and picnic experience. Even when money is tight, we spend money on those candles, and we plant that garden ourselves, every season."

"When you create a welcoming environment it builds not just the connection between company and audience, but individual audience members to each other," says Gfaller. "You can come here and feel comfortable not just opening up to new works on the stage, but to the person sitting next to you. People in our audience are genuinely interested in getting to know people they don't already know. Our national patrons return because of the quality of the experience, the opportunity to be with like-minded souls who love opera, love the arts, love having that week together with people they see only one week out of the year."

Not Just an Opera, an Experience

For summer festivals, the experience can be as powerful – sometimes more powerful – a hook as the repertory. Whether people are traveling across the country for a week's vacation or a shorter distance, festival companies work hard to create a feeling of a time and place set apart from ordinary life. 🌿



Polish composer Karol Szymanowski's *King Roger* was first performed in 1926, but waited more than 60 years to be seen in the Americas. This summer, **The Santa Fe Opera** presents a new production, July 21 – August 14, conducted by Evan Rogister and directed by Stephen Wadsworth. Designs are by Thomas Lynch (scenery), Ann Hould-Ward (costumes) and Duane Schuler (lighting). Rendering by Anne Hould Ward.



Opera New Jersey will collaborate with Brooklyn-based **American Opera Projects** to present staged readings of two new operatic monodramas: *Our Lady* (Gregory Spears, with a libretto based on medieval Provençal texts) and *The Wanton Sublime* (Tarik O'Regan/A. Rabinowitz). Talkbacks with the artists and the creators will follow each performance. The photo features Ryland Angel and Hai-Ting Chinn and is by Danielle Rivera and courtesy of American Opera Projects.



The Glimmerglass Festival's recently expanded programming includes Meet Me at the Pavilion, a series of concerts, cabarets and more in an airy pavilion on the company's lakeside campus. Last year, Amy Burton and John Musto (pictured above) were among the featured performers. This year's special performances will include Kurt Weill's *Johnny Johnson*, adapted and directed by Estelle Parsons. Photo by Julieta Cervantes.

The Ash Lawn Opera Festival began its life in 1978, performing on the grounds of Ash Lawn-Highland, the home of James Monroe. In 2009, the company began a new chapter, relocating to the historic Paramount Theater in downtown Charlottesville. Pictured below is the company's 2011 production of *The Barber of Seville*. Photo by Moore-Coll Photography.



In July, **Cincinnati Opera** will collaborate with concert:nova to present *María de Buenos Aires*, a “tango operita” by Astor Piazzola. Through partnerships with Tango del Barrio and Patricia Paz Tango, a cast of internationally recognized tango dancers will perform in the production, directed by Jose Maria Condemí. Photo by Susana Mulé.



Chautauqua Opera is the oldest continuously producing summer opera company in the United States, as well as the fourth oldest American opera company. The company performs both in Norton Hall and in the Chautauqua Amphitheater, as part of the Chautauqua Institution’s varied summer season of artistic and educational programming. Above is the company’s 2011 Amphitheater production, *Luisa Miller*. Photo by Mark Anderson.

Nickel City Opera, founded in 2004, brings full-scale opera to Buffalo, NY. The company’s 2011 production of Verdi’s *Il trovatore* featured John Packard as Count di Luna, Elizabeth Blancke Biggs as Leonora, Valerian Ruminski as Ferrando and Brett Potts as Ruiz. Photo by Rose Mattrey.



What else is happening in summer 2012?

OPERA America’s Schedule of Performances allows a number of search options, including by date range. In addition, many of our members have posted press releases that give complete season details. Visit operaamerica.org today to find out the latest, or to update your company’s information.



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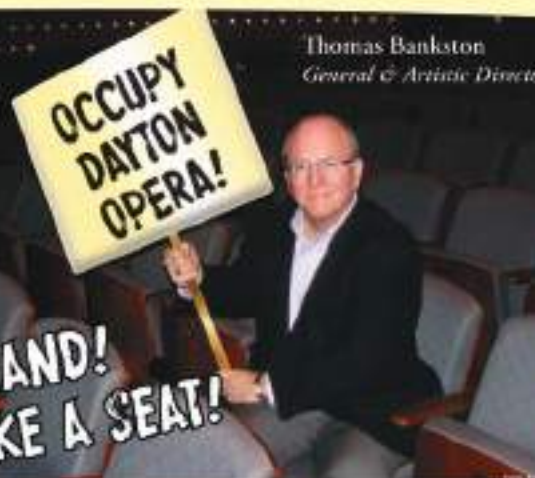
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BY KATHERINE BALTRUSH



William Henry Fry.

Before Bethlehem Steel competed with U.S. Steel to build a growing America, before Gettysburg was infamous, before there was even a Metropolitan Opera, Philadelphia was already emerging as a destination for art and culture. The city is home to the first known premiere of an opera by an American composer: On June 4, 1845, the Seguin Opera Company premiered *Leonora*, a new opera by Philadelphia native William Henry Fry.

Born in 1813 to a newspaper publisher, Fry was immersed in the bustling musical activity of his hometown. Thanks

to the senior Fry's interest in music, the Philadelphia concert scene received an unusually high level of press coverage compared with that of other American cities.

Fry began composing at the age of 18 and, by 28, had completed his first opera, *Aurelia the Vestal*, to an original libretto by his brother, Joseph Reese Fry. When interest in the opera could not be found in either the U.S. or in London, the brothers began anew. By 1845, Fry had completed the aforementioned *Leonora*, an opera in three acts, set to his

brother's libretto based on Edward Bulwer-Lytton's popular play *The Lady of Lyons*.

The staging of *Leonora* and the revivals the work received during his lifetime should have marked the success for which Fry had hoped. But despite positive initial responses, *Leonora* came to be criticized for too closely resembling the style of Bellini. Fry's next and last opera, *Notre Dame of Paris* (1862), was better received by critics, but it does not seem to have received as many performances as *Leonora*.

In addition to composing, Fry also worked as a music critic, first for his father's *National Gazette* and later for the *New York Tribune*. This secondary career, along with his activities as a lecturer on music, provides a written record of Fry's philosophy on music. He wrote of his thoughts on the balance between music and text, his beliefs regarding the requisite literary quality of libretti, and his conviction in the validity of English as a serious operatic language, which was an unpopular view in his day.

Fry's writings also leave a snapshot of more general concerns in the American musical landscape of the mid-19th century. He especially highlighted the struggle American composers had in getting their works performed, a topic he wrote of with evident frustration. He also expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of music education in America in his day and advocated for the establishment of American musical academies.

During the last of 10 lectures given in New York in 1853, Fry made a convincing case for the need to establish an American musical identity: "Until this Declaration in Art shall be made — until American composers shall discard their foreign liveries and found an American school — and until the American public shall learn to support American artists, Art will not become indigenous to his country, but will only exist

as a feeble exotic. The American composer should not allow the name of Beethoven, or Handel, or Mozart to prove an eternal bugbear to him, ...[but] should strike out manfully and independently into untrodden realms, just as his nature and inspirations may invite him, else he can never achieve lasting renown.”

Fry’s dream has since been realized, taking the form in Philadelphia of the Curtis Institute of Music, the Academy of Vocal Arts and a number of other high-ranking music programs in and around his hometown, as well as the wealth of musical talent that has flourished in that city.

Since Fry’s death in 1864, Pennsylvania has counted some of opera’s most prominent singers and composers among its natives, including Marian Anderson, Samuel Barber and

Dominick Argento. Philadelphia was also the birthplace of Mark Adamo, whose *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* is scheduled to premiere at San Francisco Opera in 2013. Additionally, the city’s many and varied opera producing organizations and educational institutions ensure that Philadelphia continues to attract the best and brightest in opera of both today and tomorrow.

Fry would likely have been pleased to see the colorful milieu of cultural institutions thriving in Philadelphia today. In his survey of American opera, *Opera in America*, John Dizikes relays Fry’s assertion that music could be a salvation from the “the desert of trade and politics.” As culture becomes increasingly integrated with the city’s identity, it would appear that Philadelphia has become exactly what Fry hoped it could be. ☺

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LOVING LEARNING AT ANY AGE: THE SUNG STORIES OF HAMILTON SENIOR CENTER

BY KATHERINE BALTRUSH

On Tuesday afternoons this spring, beneath an awning reading “Hamilton House Senior Center,” the sounds of music and laughter spilled out onto West 73rd Street in New York City. Hamilton House isn’t a rehearsal space or a church — the usual hot spots for music in the city — but one of five senior centers administered by Project FIND, a New York City nonprofit taking a different approach to healthy ageing.

Those who walk through the doors of Hamilton House are greeted with smiles from every corner and enter into a vibrant community in which seniors are eager to get started with the day’s classes. Gardening, salsa dancing, tai chi and yoga are just a few of the many diverse activities available to the Hamilton community.

This year, OPERA America teamed up with Project FIND to bring a new challenge to the seniors of Hamilton House. For 16 weeks from January through May, a group of 15 seniors spent 90 minutes each week creating their own music drama, entirely from scratch.

Teaching artists Stuart Nager and Zachary Redler guided the group’s process from week to week, both in crafting lyrics and composing music. Nager began the process by leading the seniors through oral storytelling exercises. As the group shared personal stories, themes of family and travel emerged.

Many of the seniors committed their personal stories to paper, sometimes writing many pages. As work progressed, the pieces eventually became the property of the group at large and the seniors worked together, both in small groups and as a single unit, to develop texts that might lend themselves to music. In just a few short weeks, these first-time librettists managed to convert memories into fully realized lyrics.

While Nager guided the early creative writing process, Redler exposed the seniors to music and performance right from the start. Each session began with vocal warm ups, recognizable

to any chorister, professional or amateur. All the while, Redler reminded the group about breathing, projecting, posture and articulation, expecting each senior’s personal best right from the start and pushing those boundaries each week.

For a group that largely does not read music, creating comfort with music and performance became key. Redler helped establish a musical “safe-zone” by leading the seniors in singing well-known songs for a number of weeks. A few soloists even emerged as many of the seniors found their inner performer for the first time.

Once the lyrics were ready, Redler began the composition process by improvising an underscore at the piano during a reading of the text. Though Redler took on much of the formal scoring, composing remained very much a collaborative process with the seniors. Once a draft of music was in front of them and they could hear it for the first time, Redler explained that “... they could say ‘we wanted this slower,’ or ‘can we repeat that twice.’” The seniors even collaborated on melody, singing tunes they had in mind, which Redler then worked into the final product.

As the group learned and practiced the songs they co-wrote, ideas for music and lyrics continued to emerge and the songs took new shapes. According to Redler, this process “allowed them to improvise, which is so key to musician training at any level.” The seniors of Hamilton House may not have known it, but they were already workshopping their opera.

This level of engagement by each participant in a wide variety of processes is still rare in programming for seniors. The quality of active participation impressed New York City Councilmember Gale A. Brewer when she saw the group in action. Brewer, who generously funded this pilot program, was excited to see that the seniors were being asked to think both creatively and critically, to try a number of different activities in unique combinations.

The pieces written by the seniors at Hamilton House expressed a great deal about their creators. These stories, Redler said, "...come from experiences as opposed to general washes of feeling." Nager described them as "slices of their lives that we're getting. It's incredible what they've become comfortable revealing to relative strangers in such a short amount of time."

More important than the music itself were the experiences the participants took away from the program. In 16 weeks, these seniors learned ways to express their own stories through music, to sing, to create collaboratively, to speak publicly and to connect to their neighbors in new and deeper ways. Nager felt that these results are easy to see in the group: "Confidence has grown. Camaraderie has grown. Extra connections are created between them that may not have been there before."

But perhaps program participant Leah Snyder Silverman summed it up best: "I'm very proud that I joined. I would never utter a note in front of people before, but now I do!" Fellow participant Lydia Hubbard, echoed the sentiment: "I appreciate everything I am doing here because I am learning from everyone."



Project FIND participants. Photo by Katherine Baltrush.

The success of this program in Hamilton House this spring has opened the door for OPERA America to continue exploring the possibilities of creative aging programming while increasing its impact in the local community. As the field continues to develop its skills in this critical and rapidly growing area of arts education, new sustainable and scalable models will emerge for programming that will increase engagement with this sector of communities across the country. By giving themselves over so fully to OPERA America's pilot program, the seniors of Hamilton House have become not only librettists, composers, speakers and performers. They have also become teachers. 🍷

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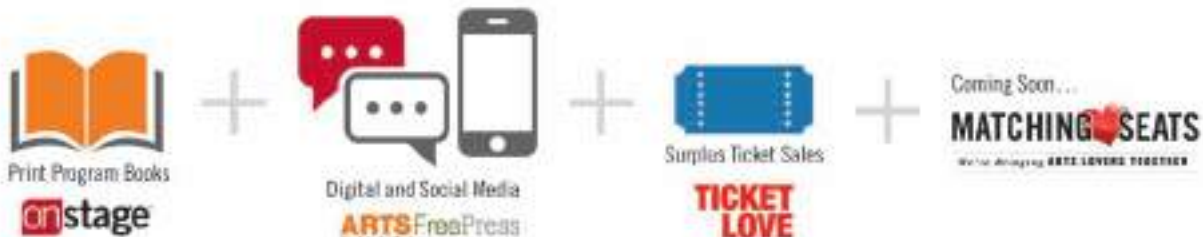
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FROM STAGE TO STAGE

BY RENATA SCOTTO

Many singers leave the stage behind once they finish their singing career. I finished singing about 10 years ago, but I haven't left the stage. Now I have another perspective of the stage as a director and as a teacher, one that I enjoy as much as singing... almost.

I have always valued study greatly. As a singer, I was taught to read the score like a novel. You don't just read for the plot, but for what's behind the story to find what is really meant. You have to look behind what's on the page and try to understand why the composer wrote this phrase and what the librettist meant. I always studied the composer, the music, the libretto, the story, the characters, all before I ever sang a note of the role. I did the singing last, after all the studying, so that I would know what the role was going to be and how I was going to sing it.

You never stop studying. And as I go on, I'm reading more about each opera I direct: about the composer, about the machinery that is on stage. I talk to everyone, go to every little rehearsal. It's a huge learning experience, and I really enjoy it.

I had always collaborated with the conductor and the director when I was singing, but I had never really thought I could be a director myself. Though the desire had been in me, I only had the idea to try directing when the Met offered me *Butterfly* in 1986. I had to think about it for three or four months before, finally, I said, "I'll try."

While I loved the old Yoshio Aoyama production, so many extra things had been added over the years. So I said, if I am going to direct it, I want to clean it up completely and do it as it was the first time. And so I did it in that original way. After that, the Arena di Verona offered to do the production and *that* scared me to death. It was in that open-air theater and I had an immense stage to fill up. But, at the same time, I didn't want to put too many things on stage. You see, I like what might almost be called minimalism in my productions. It should be minimalist enough so that nothing distracts from acting and singing and music. The sets and costumes simply provide a frame for the opera. For me, this is good taste. So, I did the opera my way and it worked for me, for the audience and for the critics.

As a singer, I always started with the acting and the character to prepare the role. As a director, I always start from the

music to find my concept. Though inspiration may come from anywhere — a museum, a modern painting, whatever you like — the music is always the boss. Music is not an opinion. It is something you give to the audience on behalf of the composer and the librettist. Finding all the elements in the music that guide the process is the key to giving the audience an experience they will remember.

When I did *Turandot*, I decided that Turandot deserved to die for her cruelty. And so my concept was that while Liu dies for her beloved, Turandot dies because she is too late for love. But I did not just have her die because I disliked her cruelty. The idea was there in the music, in the novel, in the libretto and also in a letter of Puccini's. Puccini writes that everybody has his or her place in the opera. But for Turandot, there is just a big question mark. And then he died before he could finish. So I'm trying to give to the audience what I think Puccini wanted in a simple way, in the modern way.

For me, to be modern is to be direct with the audience. I think this is what the new opera audience wants. Though the opera has wonderful traditions, there is a different audience today. If you create an opera with an ear to today's audience, instead of the old fashioned way, then maybe it can attract more young people. I do this through minimalist sets and beautiful lighting that give space to the music. When I was singing, it was always to give something to the audience. When I direct, it is exactly the same. You *have* to please the audience as best you can. It's challenging. It's tiring. But you do it!

I have learned many things and overcome many challenges in directing that I did not face as a singer. Directing the chorus, both as individuals and as a unit, is very difficult. Communicating your ideas to the set designer and lighting designer can be tough. But there is only one problem that I never overcome. As a singer, I would sing each performance, creating the opera again each time. Now that I am a director, I am out after the final dress rehearsal! It's all done then and I cry and say, "Oh my God! I can't do anything else!" It's all in the hands of who's on stage and behind the podium. But this is what is to be a director. And you always hope you've done a good job. ☺

Legendary soprano Renata Scotto retired from the stage in 2002. In addition to an active career as a stage director, she is a sought-after teacher of vocal style and technique.

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BY ALEXA B. ANTOPOL

Blackness in Opera

Naomi André, Karen M. Bryan and
Eric Saylor, Ed.s

University of Illinois Press

ISBN13: 9780252036781

Blackness in Opera critically examines the intersections of race and music in the multi-art form of opera. A diverse cross-section of scholars places well-known operas (*Porgy and Bess*, *Aida*, *Treemonisha*) alongside lesser-known works such as Frederick Delius's *Koanga*, William Grant Still's *Blue Steel* and Clarence Cameron White's *Ouanga!* to reveal a new historical context for re-imagining race and blackness in opera. The volume brings a wide-ranging, theoretically informed, interdisciplinary approach to questions about how blackness has been represented in these operas, issues surrounding characterization of blacks, interpretation of racialized roles by blacks and whites, controversies over race in the theater and the use of blackface, and extensions of blackness along the spectrum from grand opera to musical theatre and film. In addition to essays by scholars, the book also features reflections by renowned American tenor George Shirley.

How Will You Measure Your Life?

Clayton M. Christensen,
James Allworth and Karen Dillon
HarperCollins

ISBN13: 9780062102416

How Will You Measure Your Life? is based upon powerful research and theories developed at Harvard Business School and other leading institutions about success and failure. The aim was not to provide readers with any

easy answers — but instead, to prompt readers to consider the most important questions one will ever face. Nor will it tell readers what to think. Instead, it aims to teach readers how to think — about one's life and one's purpose — by using the best research available on the topic. The book won't prescribe a set path to happiness. Instead, it will equip readers to lead the type of life to which one truly aspires. These are the same tools that have allowed managers to lead companies that have gone on to change the world. The theories and situations summarized within it will help readers understand the critical decisions that can bring disappointment and sadness in life — or happiness and success instead.

American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century

John Spitzer, Ed.

University of Chicago Press

ISBN13: 9780226769769

Studies of concert life in 19th-century America have generally been limited to large orchestras and the programs we are familiar with today. But as this book reveals, audiences of that era enjoyed far more diverse musical experiences than this focus would suggest. To hear an orchestra, people were more likely to head to a beer garden, restaurant or summer resort than to a concert hall. And what they heard weren't just symphonic works — programs also included opera excerpts and arrangements, instrumental showpieces, comic numbers and medleys of patriotic tunes. This book brings together musicologists and historians to investigate the many orchestras and programs that developed

in 19th-century America. In addition to reflecting on the music that orchestras played and the socioeconomic aspects of building and maintaining orchestras, the book considers a wide range of topics, including audiences, entrepreneurs, concert arrangements, tours and musicians' unions. The authors also show that the period saw a massive influx of immigrant performers, the increasing ability of orchestras to travel across the nation, and the rising influence of women as listeners, patrons and players. Painting a rich and detailed picture of 19th-century concert life, this collection will greatly broaden readers' understanding of America's musical history.

Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment

Millie Taylor

Ashgate Publishing

ISBN13: 9780754666707

What is it about musical theater that audiences find entertaining? What are the features that lead to its ability to stimulate emotional attachment, to move and to give pleasure? Beginning from the passion musical theater performances arouse and their ubiquity in London's West End and on Broadway, this book explores the ways in which musical theater reaches out to and involves its audiences. It investigates how pleasure is stimulated by vocal, musical and spectacular performances. Musical theater contains disruptions and dissonances in its multiple texts, it allows gaps for audiences to read playfully. This combines with the voluptuous sensations of embodied emotion, contagiously and viscerally shared between audience and stage,

and augmented through the presence of voice and music. Discussions center on the construction of the composed text, performance and audience response. A number of features are discovered in the construction of musical theater performance texts that allow them to engage the intense emotional attachment of their audiences and so achieve enormous popularity. In doing this, the book challenges the conception of musical theater as 'only entertainment.' Entertainment instead becomes a desirable, ephemeral and playful concept.

**From Madrigal to Opera:
Monteverdi's Staging of the Self**
Mauro Calcagno
University of California Press
ISBN13: 9780520267688

This study links two traditionally separate genres to explore the emergence of multiple selves in early modern Italian culture and society. Mauro Calcagno focuses on the works of Claudio Monteverdi, a master of both genres, to investigate how they reflect changing ideas about performance

and role-playing by singers. Calcagno traces the roots of dialogic subjectivity to Petrarch's love poetry arguing that Petrarchism exerted a powerful influence not only on late Renaissance literature and art, but also on music. Covering more than a century of music and cultural history, the book demonstrates that the birth of opera relied on an important feature of the madrigalian tradition: the role of the composer as a narrative agent enabling performers to become characters and hold a specific point of view. 🍷

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