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SUMMER 2016

ABOUT THE COVER
Brian Stauffer, the artist responsible for this issue's cover and feature illustrations, has contributed to *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, *The Village Voice*, *Rolling Stone* and over 300 other publications.

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

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

In recent years, OPERA America members have come to recognize that opera thrives when it resonates with the world we live in, and when companies find authentic ways to become active participants in community life. Our annual conferences have developed these themes, in San Francisco, Washington and, most recently, in Montreal, where more than 500 colleagues gathered this May for four days of informative sessions, exciting performances and memorable special events.

Opera's potential for civic impact was demonstrated wonderfully over a single weekend in April, in two different cities and in two very different ways. Fort Worth Opera presented David T. Little and Royce Vavrek's new opera, *JFK*, in an eye-popping production that earned justified praise from the critics. Set in Fort Worth's Hotel Texas the night before Kennedy's assassination, the opera explores the complex relationship between Jack and Jackie, shaped by the challenges of loss and infirmity. Even as the work led us to connect with the domestic dynamics of the Kennedys, it honored the near-mythological dimension of their public images. The immediate link to our own history was powerful, especially for the Fort Worth audience, which has "owned" this story for more than 50 years. The opera moved us both because of its innate quality and because the story means so much to us.

The same weekend, Knoxville Opera mounted an unprecedented production of Puccini's *Tosca*, conceived and conducted by Executive Director Brian Salesky and staged, with the consulting input of Keturah Stickann, in three different downtown venues. The first act was performed in a magnificent neo-Gothic Methodist Church, with the audience in the middle of the action. Angelotti hid in a real side-chapel; the altar boys romped around the pulpit; and Tosca and Scarpia made entrances down the main aisle of the nave.

After an Italian-themed dinner, the audience reconvened for the second act, staged on a raised platform in the old downtown convention center, and then made its way through teeming rain to a covered outdoor amphitheater for Act III. A tumultuous ovation acknowledged the hard work and flexibility of the orchestra, chorus and soloists. Since most of the audience had never been to the church, and hadn't visited the convention center or amphitheater for years, it was an occasion for Knoxvillians to rediscover Knoxville. I sat in each venue with Mayor Madeline Rogero, who thrilled to this operatic celebration of her city.

The two events were hugely unalike, showing there is no model or formula for making a civic impact through opera. But they were unified by creativity, quality and determination.

One last note: As we go to press, I have learned the very sad news of the passing of the great American soprano Phyllis Curtin. The first Susannah in Carlisle Floyd's masterpiece, she was a pioneer in performing and promoting American opera, a great teacher and the most eloquent of arts advocates. In any age, there are few great people among us; she was one of them.

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO

FLUBACKER

Renée Fleming (center) at the January launch event for Chicago Voices, with (l–r) members of Blu Rhythm Collective, BrittanE and Miles Comiskey.

CHICAGO GIVES VOICE

"We want to open our doors to other kinds of singing and other kinds of music," says Renée Fleming. As creative consultant to Lyric Opera of Chicago, the soprano has spearheaded Chicago Voices, a multiyear initiative celebrating the human voice in all its incarnations, and paying tribute to the city that fostered Nat King Cole and Muddy Waters, among other great vocalists. The program will encompass master classes, lectures and exhibitions, as well as a gala concert featuring envoys from the worlds of hip-hop, jazz, soul and rock, along with opera. But perhaps its most unusual element is "Community Created Performances," a chance for local organizations to tell their stories through music theater.

Applicants to Community Created Performances submitted their stories in the early part of the year, and then a review panel from the Chicago Public Library winnowed the field down to eight semi-finalist groups. At that point, the Chicago public itself weighed in, voting online. "The idea was for Lyric Opera not to be the determiner," says Cayenne Harris, director of Lyric Unlimited, LOC's community-engagement arm. "We wanted a process that would allow voices that aren't normally heard to emerge."

The three finalist organizations represent the phenomenal diversity of the city itself: Harmony, Hope & Healing, an organization that brings music and spiritual support to homeless people and underserved communities; the Kirin-Gornick Band, an ensemble that connects traditional Eastern European tambura music to contemporary Chicago life; and Tellin' Tales Theatre, a group that lets people with physical and mental disabilities tell their stories through theater. The groups, each receiving $10,000, embarked in June on a 16-week workshop process; on September 24, they'll unveil the results in a public performance at the Harris Theater. The final products will be one-act works, each 20 to 30 minutes long, combining music and dialogue to tell a unique Chicago story. "I would not describe them as 'opera' or 'American musical theater,'" says Harris. "I think we will see three distinct pieces, in a musical style that suits the language of each group."

Harris emphasizes that Chicago Voices has not been conceived as an audience-building project. "We're trying to be more nimble and more responsive to the city around us," she says. "Just by acknowledging that opera singing is like other singing gives us a chance to connect in ways we never have before. It's not about getting people to buy tickets to mainstage opera — although if they do, that'd be great."

Fleming, for her part, takes issue with the idea that Community Created Performances works won't qualify as "opera." "Opera at the grassroots level is not opera as we know it," she says. "Have you seen what Beth Morrison [of Beth Morrison Projects] is up to? The mass opera audience may not have been able to get past the pieces they've loved for a hundred years. But the next generation is reinventing the form."

Fleming has put her performing skills on the line in pursuit of her convictions. She recently appeared at an open mic night for high school students, presented by the Chicago-born hip-hop star Chance the Rapper. Amidst the roster of rappers and student poets, Fleming took the stage to sing "O mio babbino caro."

"I thought, 'Oh my gosh! What will they think about me singing an aria?'" she says. "But they were incredibly gracious." More likely — they were floored. ●

— Fred Cohn

Finalists of the 2018 Domenic J. Pellicciotti Opera Composition Prize

Albert Nobbs
Patrick Soluri, composer
Deborah Brevoort, librettist

Mayo
Tom Cipullo
composer & librettist

The Reef
Anthony Davis, composer
Joan Ross Sorkin, librettist

Uncovered
Lori Laitman, composer
Leah Lax, librettist

Panel Discussion
Friday, September 23
4:00PM (EST)
featuring all of the finalists moderated by librettist Mark Campbell and Darren K. Woods, General Director, Fort Worth Opera

Workshop Performances
Saturday, September 24
Program A: 1:00PM (EST)
Program B: 5:00PM (EST)

All events will be live streamed at:
http://www.potsdam.edu/academics/Crane/streaming/

potsdam.edu/pellicciotti

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SOFIA NEGRON

Left: The Apollo Theater. Right: Baritone Will Liverman (Dizzy Gillespie) and tenor Lawrence Brownlee (Charlie) in *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* at the Apollo Theater.

NEW YORK'S NEWEST OPERA HOUSE: THE APOLLO

The Apollo Theater's April presentation of *Charlie Parker's Yardbird* marked the first time in its entire 82-year history that the storied Harlem venue had presented an opera — but it won't be the last. The Daniel Schnyder/Bridgette A. Wimberly work had originally been planned as a collaboration between Opera Philadelphia and Gotham Chamber Opera, with the Apollo simply serving as a rented venue. But after Gotham's closure last fall, the Apollo stepped into the breach as co-producer. Shortly before the work's New York premiere, the theater and Opera Philadelphia announced a multi-season collaboration on a series of new operas.

Ever since the 1930s, when it played host to such luminaries as Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, the Apollo has been celebrated as a mecca for popular music. But its executive producer, Mikki Shepard, sees contemporary opera as consonant with the theater's artistic DNA. "One of the reasons for wanting to do opera is that it's about the voice, and the Apollo has always been known for the voice," she says. "Supporting innovative work, taking a risk, being experimental — that's what the Apollo has been about its *entire life*."

The partnership enabled both organizations to engage patrons outside their typical reach. "*Yardbird* attracted both Apollo audiences and opera audiences, and this was really new for us and for Opera Philadelphia," says Shepard, who adds that strong turnout for the opera exceeded ticket-sales projections. The creative cross-pollination between institutions was a boon to fundraising, as well: Shepard notes that development efforts to cover co-production costs attracted many funders who were entirely new to the Apollo and inspired several existing supporters to increase their giving. For Opera Philadelphia, which had never previously produced in New York, the venture represents an expansion of geographic presence.

"Supporting innovative work, taking a risk, being experimental — that's what the Apollo has been about its entire life."
—Mikki Shepard

The Apollo/Opera Philadelphia partnership is looking to develop works that tell American stories, while embodying diversity both in their casts and creative teams. Their next collaboration, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, will fuse opera, hip-hop and spoken word to tell the story of a group of orphans in Philadelphia who decide to live together as a family. The work, developed by composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, librettist Marc Bamuthi Joseph and director Bill T. Jones, will receive its world premiere next year as part of "O17" — Opera Philadelphia's first urban opera festival — before moving on to the Apollo. ● *—Nicholas Wise*

AUDIENCE RESEARCH: WHYS AND WHEREFORES

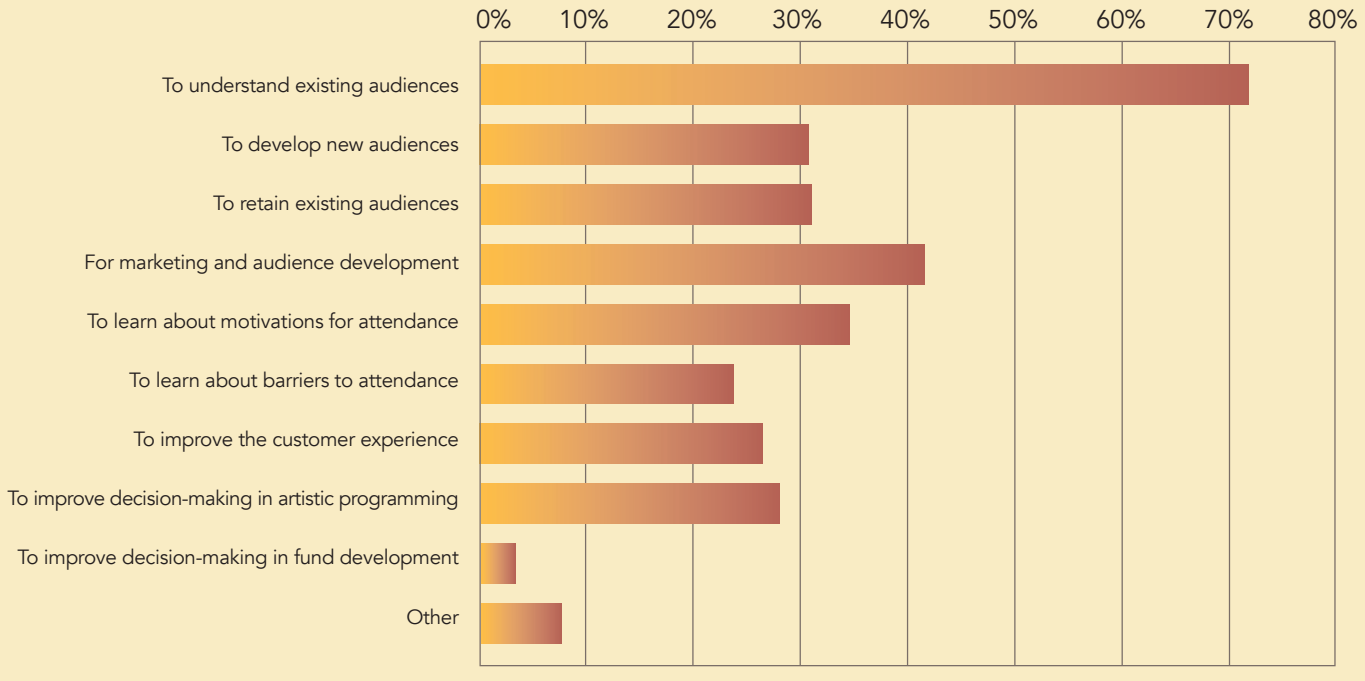
What role does audience research play in opera-company planning? A recent OPERA America study, aimed at informing future research strategies, sought to find answers. The project — developed by Ian Rye, director of artistic administration at Pacific Opera Victoria, in coordination with Patricia Kiernan Johnson, OPERA America's director of marking and communications — surveyed more than 60 OPERA America member companies to determine the scope of their audience research. Supplementary interviews, along with an audit of audience research data from selected companies, rounded out the survey results.

Findings showed that 64 percent of respondent companies had carried out audience research within the past two years. Among that group, only 60 percent engaged in research at least once a year. The majority of the research was quantitative in nature, consisting mostly of marketing-focused online surveys. While 92 percent of companies had employed surveys, only 16 percent had conducted interviews, and just 19 percent had assembled focus groups. In most cases, companies drew their respondents from internal databases, which meant that the research mostly tracked the habits and preferences of existing audience members rather than those of potential new attendees.

Limitations in funding and staff time are likely factors in the heavy reliance on surveys and the relative infrequency of research projects. Forty-three percent of companies had executed research projects at no cost, with approximately the same number conducting research for $25,000 or less. Operational funds were the most common source of research funding (cited by 56 percent of companies), while dedicated grants (18 percent), in-kind donations (11 percent) and pro bono contributions (9 percent) were far rarer. The majority of research was conducted by in-house staff, with limited access to market research experts, and only 13 percent of organizations forged research partnerships with other institutions.

After taking stock of these statistics, OPERA America is now looking at ways to bolster the field's research capacity. "What we've seen is that there is a keen interest in audience research among opera companies — most are conducting research or planning to do so — but few companies have been able to conduct in-depth qualitative research or longitudinal studies," says Johnson. "Going forward, we hope to address challenges facing companies, such as the lack of partnerships and dedicated funding, and forge strategies for gaining a deeper understanding of both existing and potential audiences."

Why Do Companies Conduct Audience Research?



KNOXVILLE'S ROMAN HOLIDAY

It was during a trip to Rome that Knoxville Opera's executive director and principal conductor, Brian Salesky, first thought to create a site-specific *Tosca*. "When you are in Rome and you visit the venues from the opera, you cannot help but be entirely enamored and inspired, as Puccini must have been," he says. A famous 1992 telecast, with Catherine Malfitano and Plácido Domingo, had set *Tosca* in its original Rome locations; during his visit, Salesky started thinking about how he could transfer the concept to Knoxville.

On April 30, Salesky's vision became a reality when Knoxville Opera staged a *Tosca* that transported singers, orchestra and audience members (more than a thousand in all) to three different venues within a single day, becoming the first company anywhere to mount a site-specific performance of Puccini's opera. A Methodist church stood in for the Basilica di Sant'Andrea della Valle, a convention center became the Palazzo Farnese, and an amphitheater built for the 1982 World's Fair acted as the site of the Castel Sant'Angelo. The production did not aim for strict architectural verisimilitude — there are no castles and palaces in Knoxville, Salesky acknowledges — but was instead designed to provide a gripping "fly on the wall" experience in which audience members took a journey alongside the opera's characters.

The novelty of the project attracted many who were new to the company, and the communal experience of traveling between unconventional venues helped forge bonds between both opera newbies and aficionados. "The audience came together," Salesky says. "People introduced themselves to each other. They were walking together; traveling on buses; eating together. It would never happen in a formal theater — and could only happen in a live show." ●

Top to bottom: The *Te Deum* from Act I of *Tosca*, performed in Knoxville's Church Street United Methodist Church. Kerri Marcinko as Tosca and Scott Bearden as Scarpia in Act II, staged at the Knoxville Convention Exhibition Center. Kerri Marcinko as Tosca in Act III, staged at the World's Fair Park Amphitheater. Brian Salesky, conductor and production designer; Keturah Stickann, staging consultant; Susan Memmott Allred, costume designer; John Horner, lighting designer.

PHOTOS: JIM JOHNSON © KNOXVILLE OPERA

KUDOS

The American Composers Forum bestowed one of its four annual Champion of New Music Awards on **Nicole Paiement**, founding artistic director of Opera Parallèle and principal guest conductor of The Dallas Opera. The award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the work and livelihoods of contemporary composers.

The American Academy of Arts and Letters announced that composer **Lewis Spratlan** and librettist **James Maraniss** are the recipients of its Charles Ives Opera Prize for *Life is a Dream*, which premiered at The Santa Fe Opera in 2010. The prize, which is made possible by the royalties to Charles Ives' music, awards $35,000 to a composer and $15,000 to a librettist.

Soprano **Tamara Wilson** has received the 2016 Richard Tucker Award, which carries a prize of $50,000. The award is conferred annually on an American singer on the threshold of a major career. Wilson will be featured at the Richard Tucker Music Foundation's annual gala on October 30 at Carnegie Hall.

Tenor **Jim Schubin** and baritone Brian Vu won top prizes of $15,000 each in 2016 Lotte Lenya Competition, sponsored by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music. Baritone **Dennis Wees** took the $10,000 second prize, and soprano Talya Lieberman and tenor Eric Michael Parker each won a third-place prize of $7,500.

The Dallas Opera announced the winners of the 28th annual Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition: The first-place prize of $10,000 was awarded to mezzo-soprano **Virginie Verrez**. Tenor **Kang Wang** received the second-place prize of $5,000, and baritone **Sol Jin** won the third-place prize of $2,500.

The Polish countertenor **Jakub Józef Orliński** took first place in the Oratorio Society of New York's 39th annual Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition, the only competition to focus exclusively on oratorio singing. He is the first countertenor to be awarded the top honor, which confers a prize of $7,000. Baritone **David McFerrin** won the second-place prize of $5,000. ●

MARIAN ANDERSON GAINS CURRENCY

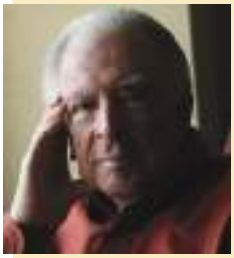
What do Eleanor Roosevelt, Marian Anderson and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. all have in common? As part of a redesign of American paper currency, all three will appear on the back of the new five-dollar bill. The design, to be unveiled in 2020, will retain Abraham Lincoln's portrait on the front of the bill, but the reverse side will commemorate historical events connected to the Lincoln Memorial: Anderson's 1939 open-air concert at the memorial, which Roosevelt helped organize, and King's "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered from the steps of the memorial in 1963.

While Anderson may not be the only woman to appear on the redesigned currency (other figures include Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and Elizabeth Cady Stanton), she is the only performing artist of the group. Born in 1897 in Philadelphia, Anderson was a world-renowned contralto with a rich, flexible voice. Conductor Arturo Toscanini called hers "a voice such as one hears once in a hundred years." Her 1955 performance as Ulrica in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* famously broke the color barrier at the Metropolitan Opera.

Anderson faced significant racial discrimination during her career. In 1939, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) refused a request for Anderson to sing for an integrated audience at Constitution Hall, its headquarters. Disgusted with the DAR's decision, Eleanor Roosevelt resigned from the organization and helped arrange for Anderson to sing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The Easter Sunday concert was attended by over 75,000 people and broadcast nationally to millions. ●

CARLISLE FLOYD AT 90

On June 11, American composer and librettist Carlisle Floyd celebrated his 90th birthday. Floyd, who has been steadily producing operas since the premiere of his first opera, *Slow Dusk*, in 1949, has contributed over a dozen works to the American operatic canon, among which *Susannah* (1955) and *Of Mice and Men* (1970) have become staples of the standard repertoire.



Floyd's work often deals with heady social issues that transverse boundaries of time and geography. From *Susannah*, which confronts misguided lust and ostracization, to *Flower and Hawk* (1972), in which Eleanor of Aquitaine deals with her own feelings of guilt and self-doubt, Floyd's theatrical directness is matched by an accessible musical vocabulary that often draws on regional folk tunes and hymns, as well as traditional classical music.

His most recent opera, *Prince of Players*, was seen at Houston Grand Opera earlier this year and was hailed by *Opera News* as demonstrating his "deep understanding and sympathy for issues that pervade our culture today — the complexities and subtleties of gender identity, sexual preference and their social consequences." Floyd discussed the creative process behind *Prince of Players* during OPERA America's five-part conversation series, *Masters at Work*, which allowed composition students across the country to ask the composer questions via live stream. Videos of the series are available on OPERA America's YouTube channel at youtube.com/OPERAAmerica.

Floyd was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2001, and in 2004 received a National Medal of the Arts. He was a 2008 recipient of the NEA Opera Honors, a lifetime achievement award administered by the National Endowment of the Arts in partnership with OPERA America. ●

PEOPLE

Jed Bernstein has resigned from his post as president of Lincoln Center.

Opera Colorado has appointed **Andres Cladera** to the newly created position of associate conductor. In addition to his conducting duties, Cladera will oversee the company's chorus, replacing **John Baril**, who has stepped down after 13 years as chorus master.

Simon Crookall's title has changed from executive director to general director of Hawaii Opera Theatre.

Pierre Dufour has resigned as general director of Opéra de Montréal.

Opera for the Young has named **Saira Frank** as managing director.

Inez Frid has been hired as marketing and PR manager of Palm Beach Opera. **Ceci Dadisman**, previously director of communications at PBO, is now a full-time marketing consultant.

Michael Heaston has been named executive director of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Metropolitan Opera, replacing **Brian Zeger**. Heaston will step down from his posts leading the young artist programs at Washington National Opera and The Glimmerglass Festival.

San Francisco Opera has announced that **Nicola Luisotti** will step down as music director at the end of the 2017–2018 season.

Brian Nickel has joined Vancouver Opera as director of development.

JONATHAN TICHLER/METROPOLITAN OPERA

Yannick Nézet-Séguin has been appointed music director of the Metropolitan Opera, beginning in the 2020-21 season. He replaces **James Levine**, who stepped down from his 40-year post at the end of this past season, assuming the title of music director emeritus.

Arizona Opera has named **Joseph Specter** as its new general director. Specter previously served in the same capacity at Austin Opera.

Viswa Subbaraman has stepped down as artistic director of Skylight Music Theatre. He will remain as artistic adviser to the company through the end of the year.

Elizabeth Telling has been named Opera Fort Collins' new executive director.

Deborah Voigt has been named artistic advisor to Vero Beach Opera. She has also joined the voice faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she will begin teaching this fall.

At Opera Columbus, **Chad Whittington** has transitioned from CFO to executive director. ●

IN MEMORIAM

Brian Asawa, a leading countertenor of his generation, died on April 18 at age 49. Asawa rose to fame in the early 1990s, becoming the first countertenor to win the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, as well as the first of his voice type to enter San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program. After making his European debut in 1993 at Netherlands Opera, singing the title role of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, he went on to perform at many of the world's leading houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, Opéra national de Paris and the Bayerische Staatsoper. Asawa leaves behind an extensive discography that showcases his mastery of both Baroque and contemporary works.

Tenor and stage director **Lincoln Clark** died on April 22 at age 90. Clark began his vocal training in the 1940s, studying with Lotte Lehmann at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara and later at the Royal Bavarian Music Academy in Munich. After singing at European houses for the following two decades, Clark returned to the U.S. in 1974 to become resident stage director of Seattle Opera. In his first year with the company, Clark assisted George London in staging the company's first-ever *Ring* cycle, and he went on to direct nearly all productions at the company until his departure in 1984. Clark later became director of opera and professor of music at Florida State University.

English composer **Peter Maxwell Davies**, known for his avant-garde, often experimental compositions, died on March 14 at age 81. Davies emerged as a leading figure in the contemporary music world in the 1960s and went on to produce an expansive oeuvre that includes the operas *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* (1976), *The Lighthouse* (1980), *Resurrection* (1987), *The Doctor of Myddfai* (1996) and *Kommilitonen!* (2011), among others. Also an accomplished conductor, Davies held the position of associate conductor/composer at both the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for 10 years. He was knighted in 1987 and served as Master of the Queen's Music, a ceremonial post analogous to poet laureate, from 2004 to 2014.

Robert Hasl, a trustee of the Cincinnati Opera for nearly two decades, died on April 18 at age 77. Hasl, a general surgeon who practiced medicine for 31 years, was a devoted patron of the arts scene in his hometown of Cincinnati. In addition to his tenure on the board of Cincinnati Opera — during which time he served on the search committees for two artistic directors — he supported Cincinnati Ballet, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He and his wife, Suzanne, have also been longtime benefactors of OPERA America and lent support to the founding of the National Opera Center. ●

point/counterpoint:

Most artists need management; all managers need clients. But those needs don't necessarily tally up. Manager ANA DE ARCHULETA and soprano ANNE-CAROLYN BIRD reveal the rewards and the conflicts of this essential relationship.

ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN STAUFFER

artists & managers

A MANAGER'S VIEW
ANA DE ARCHULETA

PETER KONERKO

As a former singer, I started my career as a manager with the ideal of representing artists the way I myself would like to have been represented. But as I've developed into the manager I am today, I've learned to approach this career with more of a business mindset. The simple fact is that although opera is an art, it's also a business. From a business standpoint, the artists I represent could be considered the "products," and the opera companies that hire them the "consumers." It is my job to build relationships with the people on both sides of that equation. I call it "the great balancing act."

When I sign an artist, we're hoping to embark on a long-term relationship. The situation demands trust on the artist's part and open, honest communication on the part of the manager. When I assess a new artist, I have to consider his or her marketability. Is this a singer with extraordinary talent — one who has a lot to say? Do companies already have her in their sights? Sometimes we form mentoring arrangements with younger artists, hoping that they will develop to the point where they are fully ready for professional assignments. It's not easy to predict the future with new artists, but you hope you can help them work at the highest level for the longest time possible.

It's important that the artist and manager find themselves on the same page. I encourage people to explore the repertoire that inspires their passion but also to accept the reality of what the market wants from them. I always tell young singers, "You are what you get hired to do." At the beginning of our relationship, we may have agreed on a specific career path, but once artists emerge into the professional world, they have to understand how the market views their talent. Perhaps the artist loves *bel canto*, but for some reason the voice is more suited for verismo. I've seen many young singers offer leading tenor repertoire even though they consistently get hired to

Continued on page 14

A SINGER'S VIEW
ANNE-CAROLYN BIRD

GLENN FAJOTA

Like any important bond in life, the relationship between singers and managers is full of ups and downs, good things and bad. When you're a young artist, having management most definitely works to your advantage. It shows that someone sees you as worth representing. Since most managers vet new artists before signing them — hearing them in auditions, seeing them perform — getting management indicates that you merit the attention of the opera world. Good managers will sit down with you to talk about career goals and dreams. Once they believe that your talent is in line with the path you've chosen, and the support they can offer, they'll get to work influencing opera companies to believe in you, too.

I am a member of a group of singers who began their professional careers in the mid-2000s. In those years, my management team was always calling with auditions and, better yet, job offers. I was turning down work because my schedule was too full! I was sure that, with my managers' help, it was going to continue this way — that I was set.

But the financial crisis of 2008 had a long-reaching effect not only on the industry as a whole, but on my career. Things have slowed down and I now take fewer auditions. I am averaging one or two new companies a year, and one or two new roles. That's a nice, slow-and-steady increase in my repertoire and visibility, but it isn't quite the robust trajectory that I envisioned when I started. Meanwhile, a lot of my assignments come not through my manager, but through the bonds I have established with administrators, conductors and directors. To be sure, those relationships were initially established through gigs that my manager obtained for me. But I've kept them going myself — with a lot of help from e-mail and social media.

One singer I spoke with said that in the past two years, she has gotten job inquiries or offers via phone, Facebook and

Continued on page 15

A Manager's View,
continued from page 13

do comprimario or Spieltenor roles. The artist has to be willing to see the discrepancy. I've decided in the past to discontinue representing artists when their expectations for their careers don't fall into line with what I realistically think can happen. In these cases, I feel it's better for performers to find managers who agree with their visions.

When we are doing our job well, we've sat down with our artists and agreed on the type of roles and trajectory they are to pursue next, and we revisit this on a regular basis. With each potential job, I ask myself — and the artist — a series of questions:

- Will the job help build the artist's network? Will the artist be making contacts that have the potential to lead to further offers?
- Does the job pay enough? Considering where the artist is in his career, does the fee make it worth his time? (If he has already done the role a dozen times in bigger houses, the money that a smaller company offers should make it an assignment worth taking.)
- Will the role be artistically fulfilling? Is it one that the artist will still be doing a dozen years from now?

With new artists, you want at least one of these elements to be in place; with more experienced artists, it should be at least two.

Essentially, we work for the artist. But ultimately, we can only sustain success if we show integrity in our business dealings with both artists *and* producers. Maintaining the trust of producers means keeping them content with the artists we offer them. Building connections with opera companies has been a long process, one that I've achieved slowly through the years. The ultimate goal: We want them to call us when they're in need, knowing that we know what they want. It comes down to putting yourself in the producer's shoes: knowing the style and taste of the producer, even the performance space itself. We want them to see the performers on our roster who suit their needs — and not waste their time (or the

singers') by offering people who don't fit the bill. In the long run, when I supply a company with an appropriate singer, I'm benefiting not only that particular artist, but also the other artists on our roster. But if I offer an unsuitable performer, I erode my credibility and make it less likely they'll look to my artists in the future.

Many singers want to be put up for every audition that fits their repertoire. This is a good thing, especially in young artists: You want them to believe they can take on the world with confidence. But the manager must also consider the needs of the company at hand. Perhaps the artist is too young and inexperienced for the particular company. I will do my best to explain that this has nothing to do with what she has to offer, but just with the current stage of her career development. The performer may not fit the stage director's conception, or the conductor's. Sometimes a show is built for a specific artist, which will lead to other roles being cast to complement the star. Sometimes a stage director will have a specific vision of what she wants — and my client frankly isn't it. The reason can be as simple as the artist's height: If he's too tall for the production's needs, that's the end of the story. And no amount of coaching can change the situation.

We can only sustain success if we show integrity in our business dealings with both artists and producers.

Situations like these are no reflection of an artist's overall worthiness: It just means he isn't right for a particular engagement. You aren't doing anyone any favors by sending out artists who you know will emerge empty-handed — least of all the artists themselves, who will often have to disrupt their lives and shell out money for travel and lodging in order to get to an audition. Before we send artists to auditions, we make it our job to assess the probability it will be worth their while.

In another era, the distance between artists and producers was big — intentionally so. The idea was "let the artist be the artist; let the producer produce." We, the managers, would take care of the business. But current pressures in the industry have changed all that. Budget cuts and shorter seasons have resulted in fewer opportunities, which means artists have to play a role in building their own networks. People in the opera business gravitate toward artists with whom they've established good working relationships. This makes it necessary for the artist to establish rapport. When companies have to choose between two or more good singers for a role, they'll inevitably gravitate toward the one who has proved to be a good colleague. Moreover, when a singer makes a rewarding personal connection with a stage director or conductor, it is her job to further that relationship beyond the specific project. This can lead to more work, but it is a connection that must be maintained on a personal level, not through the manager. Ultimately, an artist must take charge of his brand, which stems not only from the unique quality of his voice and an affinity for certain roles, but also from his work ethic and the impression he leaves with companies.

We put a lot of hard work and energy into our artists. We invest in them. Sometimes it pays off; sometimes it doesn't. But ultimately, getting good jobs for worthy artists doesn't benefit just our clients and us — it moves the art form forward. ●

Ana De Archuleta *is the president and CEO of ADA Artist Management, founded in 2004.*

DIRECTING THE DIRECTORS

A manager can play as vital a role in a director's career as in a singer's — but it's not the same role. While singers often look to their managers to set them up for auditions, the model doesn't hold for directors. "A director doesn't really audition," explains Damon Bristo, a vice president in the vocal division of CAMI whose clients include directors Christopher Alden and R. B. Schlather, along with vocalists like Isabel Leonard, Corinne Winters, Deborah Voigt and Ryan McKinny. "The job of the manager is to protect their interests."

Thaddeus Strassberger, director and set designer of Fort Worth Opera's recent *JFK* premiere, generally gets assignments through his established ties to artistic administrators. But he relies on his team of three managers to handle the business end of the equation: the nitty-gritty of fees, budgets, schedules, travel and expenses, coproductions, media rights, and royalties. "As a creative person, I want to be able to walk into the room thinking I'm doing it for love and art — which is a great feeling," he says. "If a problem comes up, I can quickly pick up the phone and ask my manager a question that doesn't have to be perfectly composed or diplomatic. Then they can get in touch with the company and get the right answer."

One such instance: Strassberger was working on an assignment in Russia when an unforeseen currency-conversion issue threatened to take a wallop out of his compensation. He got Alex Grigorev, his manager for that region, to negotiate a good-faith revision to the contract. "I was going in there to work on the set models and the casting," he says. "I didn't want to have a three-hour meeting to deal with finances."

"With a director, my job is to facilitate the relationship," says Damon Bristo. "It's like being Dolly Levi." ●

A Singer's View, continued from page 13

even text messages; all of those jobs became signed contracts, equaling about 40 percent of her work for those years. Some singers share these gigs (and therefore commissions) with their managers; others choose to keep it separate. But at least one colleague I know has decided to end his relationship with his manager: He has chosen to do the hustling himself, getting gigs through his own connections and letting his substantial work history and excellent reputation speak for themselves.

In today's opera world, with companies operating on reduced seasons or folding altogether, it is a buyer's market. Fees have fallen across the board, and the role of negotiator has largely been removed from a manager's job description. They fear that if they push for too much money, the company will simply hire another singer who will sing for less. My manager is upfront about this, letting me know that she always asks for a higher fee. But she's only occasionally successful: Company budgets are just too tight.

So why do I have management in this shifting market?

Sometimes they can help in ways that are hard to quantify. I've leaned on one of my managers to remind me that I've made the right decision to pursue a career. I remember sitting in her office one day, feeling defeated. (It's hard to be a soprano!) I flat-out asked if she thought I was beating my head against a wall. Her answer: "Do we think you should be singing Pamina with top companies all over the country? Yes." Within a year, I had a contract for my first professional *Magic Flute*.

I spoke to a colleague who switched management companies and received a level of support from his new representatives that he hadn't previously encountered. They talked to him about how to present himself and how to convey through his headshot that he was a thoughtful artist, rather than just a barihunk. More importantly, they went through his repertoire and advised him on narrowing his choice of roles in order to brand himself as a specialist in contemporary music. I myself had some useful conversations with my managers on this topic. In what roles do I excel? What genres and roles excite and energize me? Let's focus on those and leave the rest for the sopranos who love them.

A lot of my assignments have come not through the manager, but from the bonds I have established with administrators, conductors and directors.

But managers can only be as helpful as a singer lets them be. The singer has to be the ultimate driver of a career. This means that no matter how much your managers may believe in you, the job of moving things forward is your own responsibility. I took about a year off after the birth of both of my children. Both times, I needed to let my managers know when I wanted to put myself back in the game. And I also had to let them know what I was wanting to pursue: Not only had my voice gotten bigger, but I had become a bit less willing to invest time in things that didn't exactly fit my career plan.

There have been times my management has offered me a job returning to a company I had worked with some years before, in the same role — but now for a smaller fee. I didn't feel that these opportunities would move my career forward, and I told my managers as much. At first, I was surprised that they would even forward these offers: Were they not also looking to build my career's forward momentum? But then I realized that I simply hadn't told them where I wanted to go. Since it's the managers' job to get assignments for their singers, there was no great sin in the offer. It was up to me — the "chairman of the board" of ACB Enterprises — to say no.

Once I got specific with the kind of work I wanted, they knew better how to serve me and my career. Lest we singers forget, managers are, in fact, working for us. If they aren't doing the job we want them to, we need to make the necessary changes to get the results we want.

Every singer that I've talked to has her or his own experiences with managers. But what we all share is the need for support from our managers to forge ahead — on a path of our own design. It's nice having a partner in this wild and unruly business, someone at your side to help guide you through the inanity and help you bring your career into focus. But the final responsibility for your path is your own. ●

Anne-Carolyn Bird *maintains an active performing career while balancing teaching and family. Favorite roles include Mozart's Susanna, the title role of* Lucia di Lammermoor *and Sophie in* Der Rosenkavalier.

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DO COMPOSERS

A group of prominent contemporary composers have chosen to head down the self-publishing route. Does the tactic make sense? The answer, FRED COHN finds, depends on the composer.

ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN STAUFFER

NEED PUBLISHERS?

"A publisher is not a match for every composer," says Norman Ryan, vice president of composers and repertoire for Schott New York.

His words acknowledge a significant trend in today's classical-music world. Although quite a few composers follow the traditional route of working with a publisher to get their works promoted, printed and distributed, others have struck out on their own and taken the publisher's job — and their works' copyrights — into their own hands. The list of self-published composers now contains some of the most prominent names in American opera: Jake Heggie, Jennifer Higdon and Kevin Puts, to name a few.

"You can get all the aspects of publishing without being with a traditional publisher," says Bill Holab, the owner of Bill Holab Music, a firm that might superficially be described as a music-engraving outfit, but that in fact provides a range of a la carte publishing services. Self-publishing composers like Heggie and Puts use Holab as their publishing agent, responsible for music engraving and design, distribution chores, storage of materials and negotiation of agreements. Holab, who offers seminars on self-publishing, argues that composers can look elsewhere for the functions that publishers provide.

Professionals on the publishing side don't necessarily disagree with him. "I think what Bill Holab is doing is phenomenal," says Peggy Monastra, director of promotion for G. Schirmer. "The major music publishers cannot publish everyone. My advice often is 'If you're managing well on your own, perhaps you don't need a publisher.'"

But publishers also argue that they can offer a composer a unique partnership: an alliance that Ryan calls "essentially a marriage." "It's an intimate relationship," he says. "You talk together and travel together. A lot goes on behind the scenes that isn't known: It doesn't need to be known. A composer, especially a successful one, has a lot to navigate. It really helps to have an ear. 'What's the next move for me?' 'Hey, will you listen to this?'"

"We're always talking to composers and asking what it is that really inspires them; what do they want to do next?" says Zizi Mueller, president of Boosey & Hawkes' American arm. "Then I go and find the institutions that want to get involved. I work hard to put the composers in a position where they're constantly feeling inspired

DAVID WHITE

Kevin Puts

by their next project.

"It's really a full-service thing," Mueller says about the relationship. "A good publisher will see composers through the lifetime of their work. They'll steer them through the ups and downs; advise them on what kind of writing to do, what genres to pursue. Artists don't necessarily have the bigger picture in mind: It's hard to make those decisions when you're in a studio writing music."

She mentions Steve Reich as a composer who has thrived due to the Boosey connection. The celebrated minimalist was already enormously influential when he signed with the house in 1987. But his own ensemble was responsible for the overwhelming majority of his works' performances. "We said, 'Listen, let's see what we can do if we let other people play your work,'" Mueller says. "Within a couple of years, his catalog had increased in visibility worldwide. It was a huge change for him."

Publishers can play an especially vital role in opera. The art form is as complex from a business perspective as from a creative one, and the territory becomes particularly hard to navigate once co-commissions and rights for subsequent productions get taken into account. (A commissioning company's ownership stake can become a particularly problematic issue.) A publisher's know-how may well be needed to make all the interlocking parts move in synchrony. "Opera is much more complicated to manage than chamber music or even an orchestral catalog," says Peggy Monastra. "There's a lot a publisher can offer."

"In opera, self-representation is really tough," says Mueller. "The publisher brings the general directors and their staffs together with the composer. We understand both sides — what the opera company needs and what the composer needs."

But for all the services that composers can glean from a publishing affiliation, the deal presents a huge stumbling block, one that some aren't prepared to jump over: copyright. When they sign with publishers, composers typically sign over the rights to their compositions. This means not only that the publishing house has control over who gets to perform the material, and when, but that it also draws a percentage of all revenues — generally 50 percent. The copyright issue is the chief reason that Kevin Puts has decided to go the self-publishing route. "A major house wanted to publish my operas," he says. "I did the math, and couldn't see that it would be worthwhile financially — unless they got three or four times more performances of *Silent Night* than I was getting." Aside from using Holab as a publishing agent, Puts employs a publicist to handle internet and social media chores; and a manager/lawyer, Brian Taylor Goldstein, to negotiate contracts.

"What a publisher is supposed to be able to do for you, aside from administration and bookkeeping, is promotion," says Puts. "I think there was a time when if a composer's work was misunderstood, they were the ones to say 'This guy is really important. You should take a look.' But I think my music speaks for itself. When the artistic director of an opera company goes to hear one of my pieces, that's the best promotion possible."

"By definition, a composer today has to be an entrepreneur," Holab says. "I know people with Schirmer who are successful because they promoted themselves. Schirmer didn't do it; *they* did it." He sees the notion that publishing houses hold the key to promotion as a relic of the last century, made obsolete by the internet's capacity for connectivity. "It used to be if someone like Schirmer said 'We're publishing Gabby Frank,' people would pick up on it," he says. "Now, if you go on Google, you can do the research very quickly. I think orchestras think the same way: They get personal recommendations, but they aren't going to Boosey and saying 'Who do you have that's hot?'"

But even if the publishing side doesn't have a monopoly on promotion, it can sometimes offer composers the kind of global reach they might not be able to attain on their own. "Typically, American music has trouble traveling across the Atlantic, but we've had nice success for our composers," says Mueller, referring to Boosey's offices in London and Berlin. "We tell composers, 'Your local office can navigate you and your music through the network of the company throughout the world. The better that connection, the better chance you have of surviving." To be sure, publishers don't offer the only route to international performance: Heggie's self-published *Dead Man Walking* has been produced in Australia, South Africa and throughout Europe. But David T. Little, who signed with Boosey in 2014, credits the publisher's overseas promotional capabilities with securing German productions of *Dog Days*.

To a certain extent, the choice of whether or not to sign with a publisher may simply be a matter of temperament. Heggie has put together his own company, Bent Pen Music, to handle his publishing chores; being the head of his own team, he says, suits his personality

"I started asking myself, 'Will I be a happier person if I'm not running out to Kinko's at two in the morning?'"

—David T. Little

to a tee. "I've always enjoyed the administrative work," he says. "It stimulates my creativity. I am very gregarious; I like being out there. The whole reason I'm in the arts, particularly opera, is the collaborative nature of it — the connectivity."

By contrast, Little welcomed getting out of self-publishing through his Boosey contract. The move came, significantly, as he was embarking on his biggest project yet: the opera *JFK*, which had its premiere in April at Fort Worth Opera. "I had been committed to the idea of self-publishing," he says. "Before I signed with Boosey, I really suffered — I deliberated for years about it. But I found myself needing to think about so many things other than writing music: copying, printing, mailing." He compares himself with John Mackey, a composer who has not only set up his own company, Osti Music, to publish his works, but also regularly blogs about the virtues of self-publishing. "He has made a cottage industry of publishing his own work, but he also really enjoys it." Little says. "And I realized I kind of hated doing it. It made me deeply unhappy."

"Younger composers may have a lot of questions about the copyright issue," says Monastra. "But when their careers get busy, they tend to want to hand things off to a publisher. They get to a point where they just want to be focused on composing."

"I started asking myself, 'Will I be a happier person if I'm not running to Kinko's at two in the morning?'" Little says. "As I started to write larger pieces, Boosey was a lifesaver. It was no longer my responsibility to brave out registering copyrights, or to get materials ready for workshop. It's been a very freeing thing for me. I've got no regrets."

Little has even reconciled himself to the idea of giving up copyright. "It was definitely the thing that made me most hesitant," he says. "But I realized I'm not going to be around forever to promote my own work. If you want the work to outlast you, it behooves you to entrust it to an institution that will outlast you." He offers the example of Aaron Copland as a composer from the past whose legacy is under the stewardship of a publishing house. "Not to say that the music wouldn't get done without Boosey," Little says, "but the composers from his generation who aren't with the big houses aren't in the public consciousness the same way. The music is hard to get; no one is working for it."

Even Bill Holab — as close to a guru as the self-publishing movement possesses — acknowledges that some composers may find themselves better off with a publishing house. "If you're self-published, you have to take responsibility," he says. "Let's say you've written an opera and you need revisions: You'll have to hire someone to do the revisions and corrections, and reprint the score. You have the copyright; you have to pay for it. A composer recently talked to me about representing him for a score that needed huge revisions, but he didn't want to pay for it. He had a publisher that was interested, so I said, 'If they'll pay for the revisions, then it's worth it for you.'"

"The essence of being a composer is 'What do you need, and how do you go about it?'" Holab says. In the words of Schott's Norman Ryan: "It's never a one-size-fits-all situation." ●

MERRI CYR

David T. Little

ART & CLARIFY

Jake Heggie

SHAKING THE TREES STRATEGICALLY

The key to successful opera-company fundraising is careful planning — and diligence. BY PAT WECHSLER

At first glance, opera fundraising seems to rely on a huge amount of serendipity. Take the evening a few years ago when Gregory Carpenter, general director of Opera Colorado, sat down to dinner with a pair of longtime donors to discuss the company's new initiatives, including an idea to offer free opera events. Little did he know, the couple had recently sold their business and started a foundation with a mission to expand access to the arts. "Suddenly I found myself with three years of funding for a free-opera initiative," he recalls. An unforeseen windfall? Only up to a point. In fact, the gift was the product of hard work on the part of Carpenter and his development department in assessing current donors and their willingness to give more. "We have conversations all the time to find out what makes donors tick and what will get them to increase their giving," Carpenter says.

In the words of Elisabeth Galley, a vice president with Arts Consulting Group, "Serendipity happens not because serendipity falls out of the sky, but because smart planning has triggered something."

Finally emerging from the travails endured during and after the 2007–2009 economic downturn that crippled the industry, companies across the country are now trying to reap the spoils of two years of healthy investment returns. Despite the recovery, they can't afford to let up their relentless pursuit of the contributed funds that determine whether the curtains go up. If anything, this millennium's explosion in the number of nonprofits, a steady decline in governmental grants and corporate support, and a recent pullback by some foundations have exerted new pressure to expand individual giving. Important tools to success include activist boards willing to get their hands dirty fundraising; strategic plans that let opera companies show donors what the future will look like; and savvy development teams that keep donors informed about company progress.

Unusual projects that make companies stand out grab not only donors' attention — but also their dollars. For instance, Opera Colorado raised $500,000 above and beyond its annual fund for this year's world premiere of Lori Laitman's *Scarlet Letter*. "If you can offer donors something unique, not just another *Bohème*, it can be incredibly compelling," Galley says. "These are the things that differentiate companies and ultimately move them up in the priorities of donors."

Initiatives that have proved particularly meaningful are those that paint for donors the bigger picture of the opera company's relevance to the community. Ask Mark Saville, who recently arrived at Fort Worth Opera after a four-year stint as director of development at Arizona Opera. The Phoenix-based company was on the brink of bankruptcy when he and Artistic Director Ryan Taylor arrived, but the two doubled the donor base through a campaign called "Arizona Bold," which helped establish the company's relevance by presenting material connected with the state, including productions of Emmerich Kálmán's 1953 operetta *Arizona Lady* and the upcoming world premiere of Craig Bohmler's adaptation of the Zane Grey novel *Riders of the Purple Sage*.

Fort Worth Opera pursued a similar strategy with its recent world premiere of *JFK*, set in the city's Hotel Texas on

ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN STAUFFER

"You can never save your way to prosperity."
—Gregory Robertson

the night before the president's assassination. Fort Worth's next project is a four-year commitment to Latino works called "Noches de Ópera" — another initiative with demonstrable local resonance. Houston Grand Opera found fundraising success this past season with Gregory Spears' *O Columbia,* about NASA's shuttle program and the American spirit of exploration, and David Hanlon's *After the Storm,* about the hurricanes that have ravaged the nearby coastal city of Galveston.

Opera Colorado's Carpenter sees his company's 2017 premiere of Laura Kaminsky's *As One*, a chamber opera about a transgender person, as an opportunity to make connections with the local LGBT community — a chance not just to expand the company's audience, but its donor base, as well. "This approach requires more one-on-one time with donors," Carpenter explains. "But this is funding I would not get if I were just asking them to sponsor another production of *The Marriage of Figaro*."

Opera's future doesn't only lie in new material that appeals to the growing American diversity and donors' need for relevance. As Robert Meya, the director of development at The Santa Fe Opera, points out, artists also are experimenting with opera's traditional form, forsaking lavish sets, costumes and lighting and full orchestras to perform in train stations, a bus depot, even a basketball court. Brooklyn's environmental Loft Opera stagings and of The Industry's *Hopscotch* ("a mobile opera for 24 cars") in Los Angeles both point the way toward a new generation of donors. "There is a shift in what people want opera to be," Meya says. "These initiatives to make programming more relevant are hugely important to opera's survival."

But headline-grabbing projects alone can't fill the coffers: Successful fundraising demands a good measure of development savvy, best business practices and a lot of personal interaction. Take the *JFK* premiere. Saville used it as an occasion to employ wealth engine screening — a technique that uses databases to help assess the philanthropic capacity and propensity of individual donors. Normally reserved for the main donor base, the screening helped Saville prioritize donors coming to the festival: Development staff handed out color-coded badges at all *JFK*-related events, allowing them to recognize high-priority attendees. "To the attendees, the badges merely had a red, white or blue border, but for us they provided a strategic identifier to those individuals who required extra attention and a guaranteed follow-up," Saville says.

At the premiere performance itself, high-ranking single-ticket buyers found a handwritten note on their seats inviting them to the VIP reception. "I had one gentleman call me the following day to ask how we found him in an otherwise sold-out performance hall, when he had purchased his four backrow seats at only $17 each the day prior." Saville says. "It turns out he runs a multimillion dollar foundation. This was his first foray

into the world of opera."

While some companies concentrate on eliciting increased contributions from existing donors, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis has found success in diversifying its donor pool. In fact, the company's development strategy puts as high a priority on expanding its donor list as increasing its contributed revenue. "The name of the game is being able to quickly adapt, and if one source isn't available in a given year for whatever the reason, then there should be somewhere else to turn for money," says General Director Timothy O'Leary. "When we're building our annual fund, we emphasize growing both the dollars raised as well as the number of donors — both metrics are important." The more a company can develop different types of donors — some who want to contribute to the annual fund and others looking to make a longer-term impact through multiyear gifts — the better it can support a variety of fundraising activities, O'Leary explains.

The strategy has helped OTSL organize an endowment campaign, called "Building on Excellence," to help protect long-term sustainability — a luxury for most companies struggling to meet their annual-fund needs. O'Leary has overseen a 70 percent growth in the company's endowment, from $16.5 million in October 2008 to $28.8 million. Aggressive strategic planning has helped prepare the development staff and board for the multiple asks they regularly make of donors.

O'Leary attributes the company's success in part to an emphasis on what he calls "stewardship." "Fundraising cannot just be about asking for and receiving gifts," O'Leary says. "When a donor makes a major endowment gift, maybe years in the past, it's important to keep that donor up to date and involved and knowledgeable about the continuing impact of the gift."

Gregory Robertson, chief advancement officer at Houston Grand Opera, has found wisdom in an old adage: You have to spend money to make money. In his 10 years at HGO, his development

SURPLUSES AND DEFICITS

Fundraising never happens in a vacuum. That's a key message that President/CEO Marc A. Scorca delivers when he consults with opera companies. He visits roughly a dozen companies a year for two-day consultations with boards and staff. The core of each visit is a benchmarking session that uses OPERA America's Professional Opera Survey results to make comparisons with companies of similar size. "I think of it as an opera-company electrocardiogram," says Scorca.

"Boards tend to focus on the financial surplus or deficit" Scorca says. "But I work with them to discover whether the company has an *artistic* surplus or deficit: Is the work onstage good enough to compel people to subscribe, to renew their subscriptions, to contribute, to get their friends to contribute? Does it have a *human* surplus or deficit — are there enough people with the right skills doing the work? I ask them to look at whether they have a *civic* surplus or deficit: Does the company have enough impact in the community, especially outside the walls of the opera house, to generate the philanthropy needed to support the enterprise?

"All four dimensions — the financial, the artistic, the human and the civic — are linked," Scorca says. "We assess them to find out where the company needs to invest in order to thrive."

team has expanded from 12 to 20 people. Over the same period, contributed revenue has doubled from $8.5 million to $17 million. "Most companies simply don't have the infrastructure to attract more contributed support and raise enough to be successful," Robertson says. "Yet, if you look at opera as a business, there's literally no other way for opera to be successful except to raise more contributed support. You can never save your way to prosperity."

"One of my board members likes to say that great organizations are built by the spoonful, but are dismantled by the shovelful," says Robertson. "It's a vicious cycle — the more you cut, the fewer performances you have, the fewer people come, and the fewer new people who might want to give you money."

A commitment to the hiring and training of new development people requires a leap of faith. But Robertson sees it as key to fundraising success. "The coin of the realm is personal solicitation, but that's not happening without the people," he says. "You can't control whether someone ends up giving a gift. But you can control how often you talk to them, how often you invite them to something, how often you ask them for money. Development is basically a sales process where care and attention to donors or customers usually pay off."

Working with a donor base heavily weighted toward senior citizens, Stacy Ridenour, director of development at Sarasota Opera, has focused on planned giving. One recent break for Sarasota: a tax package that made charitable IRA rollover provisions permanent. Ridenour has pointed out the "wonderful news" in newsletters and chats with donors. The enacted legislation allows donors 70½ years of age or older to make tax-free contributions of up to $100,000 to nonprofits, letting them avoid taxes on their required IRA distributions.

As the industry emerges from one of its most challenging periods, those companies left standing are able to do so only because they have been able to divine a course that has engaged donors and motivated board members. Much of that success has been based on the ability to show their relevance to the community and civic contribution.

This year, OTSL secured five major gifts of $750,000 to $1 million, four of which came from long-time donors passionate about opera. The fifth, though, came from Jack Taylor, founder of Enterprise Rent-A-Car: a major benefactor of the city's symphony, but not a diehard opera fan. Since the St. Louis Symphony already served as the orchestra for the OTSL, the company suggested that the Taylors' gift be used to pay for those services, an idea which further reinforced the Taylor legacy.

"While many donors are motivated strictly out of a love for the art and the artists, increasingly donors want to see a vision of how the organization is relevant to the community and understand its impact," says O'Leary. "Mr. Taylor sees the opera as being important to the civic landscape. While a wonderful surprise, the gift demonstrates the basic ancient fundraising wisdom that success comes from the long-term relationship and vision you build over time." ●

Pat Wechsler *is a veteran journalist who has held senior editing and writing positions at* Business Week, Bloomberg, Newsday *and* New York *magazine. Most recently, she served as a senior vice president at FleishmanHillard, where she created and ran an award-winning online thought-leadership magazine focused on the intersection of communications, marketing and media.*

TERRENCE MCCARTHY

A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID GOCKLEY

When DAVID GOCKLEY retires in July as general director of San Francisco Opera, he'll put a cap on one of the most extraordinary careers in American opera. As general director of Houston Grand Opera (1972–2005) and then in San Francisco (2006–2016), Gockley not only offered 44 years of repertory opera at the highest international level, but he also created an astonishing legacy of 43 world premieres, including Leonard Bernstein's *A Quite Place*, John Adams' *Nixon in China*, Daniel Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas*, Mark Adamo's *Little Women*, Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* and Christopher Theofanidis' *Heart of a Soldier*. Gockley, who helmed OPERA America's board from 1985 to 1990, visited the National Opera Center this spring for an unbuttoned conversation with OPERA America President/CEO MARC A. SCORCA.

MAS: Let me start by asking you: What was your introduction to opera?

DG: My parents didn't attend opera, but they sat me down on Sunday evenings to watch *The Voice of Firestone* and its successor, *The Bell Telephone Hour*. And of course opera singers appeared periodically on Ed Sullivan, like Leontyne Price singing "Pace, pace mio dio" from *La forza del destino*. Also, I saw Mario Lanza in *The Great Caruso*. So I knew what an aria was and I've always believed since that time that arias are our calling cards: They're short, they're sweet, and they touch. Then when I was at Brown, I went up to Boston and saw *The Tales of Hoffmann*, with Beverly Sills and Norman Treigle.

MAS: So, there you were, a student at Brown...

DG: I was studying engineering — in the early 60s, everybody had to be an engineer, with Sputnik and all that. While I didn't flunk out, I did not at all excel. Then my choral professor Erich Kunzel suggested that I might have the voice to sing opera. And lo and behold I auditioned for John Crosby and John Moriarty for The Santa Fe Opera and became an apprentice just after I graduated from Brown.

MAS: Was the apprenticeship an act of curiosity or a decision that opera was going to be what you wanted to pursue?

DG: I wanted to see how far I could go.

MAS: You enjoyed singing?

DG: Oh I loved it. But obviously I didn't become a singer. It turned out that it was not easy for me. I had a harder and harder time with it. I constantly had sinus infections and what later became known as reflux. That could have been psychosomatic, I don't know, but my voice teacher, Margaret Harshaw — her eminence — told me that I needed to take a break from singing. A very long break.

MAS: A lifetime break?

DG: I think that's what she had in mind.

MAS: I know you then went for an M.B.A. Were you committed to opera then as an administrator?

DG: Yes. I gradually tilted my studies to what later became "arts management" — I don't think they had those programs in 1969. And I got an internship about a third of my way through with John Mazzola, who was managing director of the Lincoln Center complex. I learned a lot from him: It was the year that the Metropolitan Opera had a strike and they closed for quite some time, and it was really a near disaster for them. When I was finishing business school, Mazzola offered me a job. But a singer friend who had worked in Houston told me they were looking for a business manager there. I made two trips down there in the summer of 1970, and accepted that job. I was married at that time to Patricia Wise, who was very much the young successful lyric coloratura at City Opera, in the shadow of La Sills. We were having a nice life in New York City, living at the Ansonia. But when I went to Houston, and she ultimately went to Vienna, it gradually put the kibosh on that relationship.

MAS: You've been so committed to new work. Was this something you liked from the beginning, or was there an epiphany?

DG: Pat had bought the sheet music for "Ain't it a pretty night" and "The trees on the mountain" [from Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*] and I said, "Holy shit!" It got me to go to Cincinnati after my first nine

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ARCHIVES

Gockley and Sills on the set of Houston Grand Opera's *Fille du regiment*.

months in Houston and see *Of Mice and Men*, which I decided then and there would be part of my first planned season in Houston. I had already created a season that we called the Spring Opera Festival in the [outdoor] Miller Theatre season, and *Susannah* was a part of that, along with *The Elixir of Love* and Minnesota Opera's production of [Dominick Argento's] *Postcard from Morocco*. I knew that doing new works would get attention from the media and the people in our field. That led to our first commission: Thomas Pasatieri's *The Seagull*, with Frederica von Stade, Richard Stilwell, Evelyn Lear and John Reardon. While that was not perhaps the greatest work of all time, it was very beautiful, for the most part, and our public liked it. In the summer of 1971, I talked to Carlisle about what became our commission for the bicentennial, *Bilby's Doll*.

MAS: What do you see as the role of the producer in shaping a new work for your theater?

DG: I think the idea of an editor/producer is very important. Carlisle will tell you that I was always frank with him, without threatening our relationship. I remember talking to him about his orchestration, about brevity or about making a piece more lyrical.

MAS: If you know a composer less well, are you less engaged in that editor role?

DG: We did the premiere of Michael Tippett's *New Year* in Houston. He was in England, and Glyndebourne was a partner, so there wasn't this kind of cozy American-to-American relationship. He didn't necessarily know me from anybody. Tippett did these weird, mystical works. They were so multilayered and complicated that you couldn't say "cut this" or "cut that." And when I gave Leonard Bernstein notes on *A Quiet Place*, his attitude was "Who's this little twerp?"

MAS: Today everyone's doing new American opera. If it's not a premiere, it's the second or third production. Are you surprised by the volume today? Or are you surprised it took so long for us to get here?

DG: I think it's amazing. It's very gratifying to have been in on the ground floor of that, proving that you could do new works, or *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*, and still be successful with your audiences. We were buoyed by having a substantial subscription base, which was driven by none other than Beverly Sills, who made time in her schedule for American regional opera. I think we had her every year from '70 to '75. She was a star, an American kind of star. So we could build a subscription base around her. Maybe the subscribers didn't come to *Lulu* or *Susannah* or *Bilby's Doll*. But for the most part, they didn't cancel their subscriptions, and it was a safety net.

MAS: Scott Joplin's [1911] *Treemonisha* was an early hit for you.

DG: Frank Corsaro, who was very much a muse in my early years in Houston, brought me *Treemonisha*. That had a staggering impact in Houston. Then it went on to tour and played on Broadway for 18 weeks with Carmen Balthrop and Kathleen Battle alternating in the title role. At some point I saw *Porgy and Bess* in Berlin at the Komische Oper and launched it as a project in Houston, with [producer] Sherwin Goldman and [HGO music director] John DeMain. So *bang!* — in two successive summers we had two operas with all-black casts, *Treemonisha* and *Porgy*.

MAS: You built an extraordinary organization in Houston, which is an amazing accomplishment.

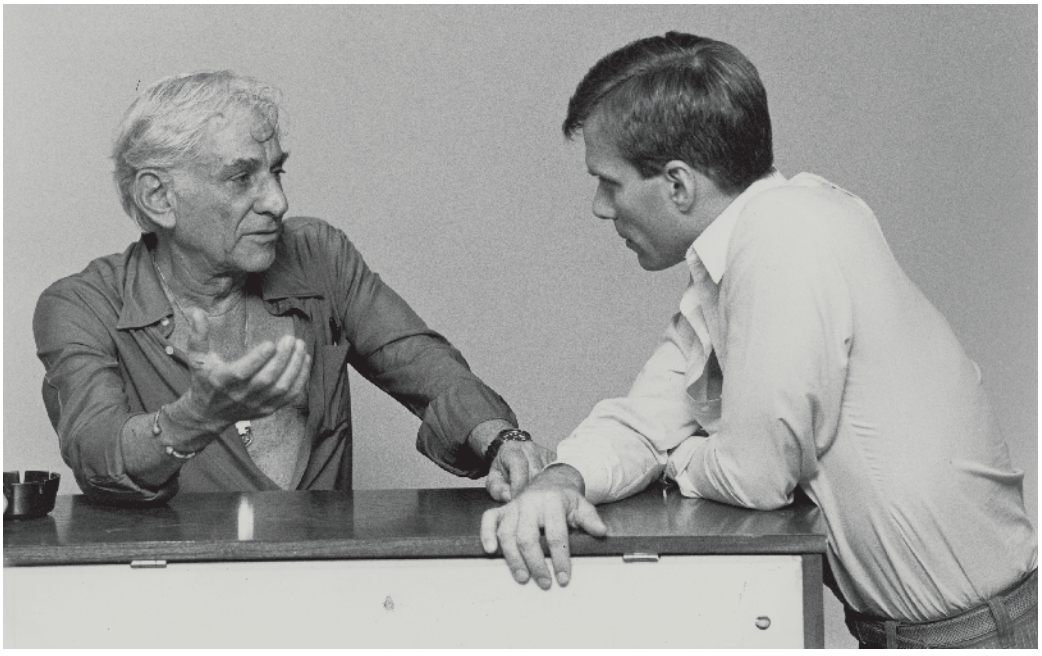
DG: But it has stayed flexible. To my knowledge, there are still no union guarantees. There is some medical contribution to AGMA Part A or whatever, but it's not what other companies have to shoulder.

MAS: In Houston, you built the Wortham Center; in San Francisco, you now have the Wilsey [the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera].

DG: Which is very small and thus limited. It would have been great if we could have had 600 seats, not 300, but we didn't have the footprint to do that.

MAS: When Matthew [Shilvock, general director-designate at San Francisco Opera] was your associate general director, did you

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ARCHIVES



Bernstein takes Gockley's notes on *A Quiet Place*.

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ARCHIVES

Houston Grand Opera's *Nixon in China.*

prepare him strategically? Did you think, "I want to be developing a new general director"?

DG: Yep. I knew how capable and bright he was, and how knowledgeable he was quickly becoming. I said, "That guy will run an opera company; the only question is which one." From the time he came from Houston with me to San Francisco, I knew he had the chops to do a big job.

MAS: Did you dedicate attention to the development of a young general director by design?

DG: Yeah, or you can look at it this way: I gave him all the stuff I didn't want to do. Like labor negotiations for one thing. I find that the most grueling, unpleasant part of the job.

MAS: If Kurt Adler [the late general director of San Francisco Opera] were alive today, what would you tell him?

DG: I would say, "Kurt, every great star doesn't automatically come to San Francisco like in your time." And by the way, who are the stars? And so maybe it doesn't matter.

MAS: How does a general director have the bandwidth? You're in Europe hearing singers and talking to directors. You are the face of the company in the community. You have to spend time with board members and donors. You have to manage a hundred people who work for you.

DG: It was a lot easier with Houston's schedule for me to get to Europe than it has been in San Francisco. But I've told Matthew, "You've got to take three to four weeks." I know Adler went every January or February because I used to run into him. Every year he maintained relationships; took people to dinner. In retrospect, I could have been more effective that way and spent more time there.

MAS: If you were a young man taking over an opera company again, what would be your key objectives?

DG: I would try to create a young, nimble operation, a company that ultimately had the flexibility to work in different kinds of spaces. I would not sign any union agreements that required anything other than showing up to work and getting paid for what you do, not for what you don't do. That heavy blanket of overhead affects our nimbleness and our ability to do new things in new ways in new venues.

MAS: What would you say now to that 21-year-old senior at Brown who wanted a career in opera? What advice would you give him?

DG: Well, I have to say I'd advise him to get into OPERA America's leadership program. Your fellowship program, which doesn't exist any longer, delivered Matthew into our field, and I'm sure there are others. But a young person with intelligence and musical sensitivity should take just about any job he can and use it as a springboard.

MAS: When you entered the field, opera, symphony and ballet occupied an undisputed position at the top of the cultural pyramid. We've experienced a complete upending of the cultural pyramid into something much flatter.

DG: You know, it wounds me when I see these cultural changes. In San Francisco we have so many neighborhood organizations, hundreds of them. Together they have huge influence — and frankly we don't. Here we are, sitting in a big theater right across from City Hall, and the city

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA ARCHIVES

HGO's *Porgy and Bess* with Donnie Ray Albert and Clamma Dale.

supervisors have the attitude that no matter what we do, we are a rich person's plaything and the rich people will take care of us. After all this time, that's disheartening. We've seen subscriber diminution, which need not necessarily be bad. It leaves room for a lot more people to attend. More and different kinds of people are attending, but they don't attend all that often, and they usually don't make gifts. I feel that we're at the end of an era, but we can't quite see the next. The growth of small opera companies is exciting, but it doesn't deal with the real problems that the bigger institutions are facing.

MAS: Many smaller companies do not pay a living wage to the artists or the people who run them.

DG: It's like the old Pennsylvania Dutch expression, "The faster I go, the behind-er I get." But there's got to be a new marketing paradigm that I don't see yet. The summer festivals have a wonderful advantage. And so do the smaller companies, because their price level is attractive. For [the SF Opera Lab production of Ana Sokolović's] *Svadba-Wedding*, we had a $75 ticket price. We got a lot of feedback that that was too much, and that Opera Parallèle charges $45. Well, how many union people are they paying? You're catching me at a kind of sobering time, you know.

MAS: Opera Parallèle has a $45 top ticket price, but so many people are getting so much of their entertainment for free that it's no longer how much we cost compared to the symphony or the ballet; it's how much we cost compared to the free entertainment that people are accustomed to getting. The idea of paying at all is contrary to the way people live their lives now.

DG: You hit the nail on the head. We've done free opera at the ballpark and we have four primetime KQED broadcasts. So maybe we have in some ways made it too easy to have some kind of opera for nothing. But otherwise, how do you get people in contact with opera at all?

MAS: Your donor dinner obligations, your travel to see work, your nights at the theater — work/life balance hasn't been part of the equation, has it?

DG: No. These 10 years have taken their toll, and I'm exhausted. People say to me, "What are you going to do, retire?" And I say, "Ask me after I've slept late for six months." ●

For an extended version of this article, vist medium.com/@OPERAAmerica.

PATRICIA K. JOHNSON

Above: Gilbert Rozon, founder of the Just For Laughs comedy festival delivers an address at a session about festival experiences.
Below: Blythe Gaissert and Kelly Markgraf in a scene from *As One*, by Laura Kaminsky and Mark Campbell, at the New Works Sampler.

OPERA CONFERENCE 2016: *GLOBAL STRATEGIES/LOCAL ACTIONS*

OPERA America has held four previous conferences in Canada, but Opera Conference 2016: *Global Strategies/Local Actions*, was its very first in Montreal. Hosted by Opéra de Montréal in association with Opera Volunteers International from May 18–21, the conference brought together over 500 people to examine ways in which global trends — from both within and outside the opera world — can inform the bold decisions needed to bring vitality the art form.

Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America, set the stage for the next three days of discussions at the Opening Assembly: "As we seek to increase the civic impact of opera and opera companies, we have to imagine the possibilities for collaboration in the broadest possible terms," said Scorca. "We have to be opera activists to bring our work to other sectors of public life. For the foreseeable future, we have to be the initiators, but our success will be revealed when ultimately leaders in our cities approach *us* for *our* help because they appreciate how we enrich every aspect of the community." Simon Brault, director of the Canada Council of the Arts, asserted the need for art to reflect contemporary issues and audience diversity.

YVES RENAUD

An address from Quebec-born opera and film director François Girard followed, stressing the need for opera productions to marry high musical standards with compelling theatricality.

Strategies for making opera an engaging and valued art form were further explored in an open session titled "The Festival Effect," which looked at how festival formats have attracted new audiences, broadened artistic genres and demonstrated organizational adaptation. Gilbert Rozon, founder and chairman of Just For Laughs, Montreal's month-long comedy festival, detailed how this annual event has become a valued asset, bringing both significant revenue and civic pride to the city. Laurent Saulnier, vice president of programming and production at Festival International de Jazz de Montréal, then discussed how his festival has managed

to expose aficionados to genres outside of traditional jazz and, through its free outdoor concerts, attract new attendees.

The conference provided the opportunity to take in some of the field's newest works, including two world premieres: Opéra de Montréal's *Les Feluettes* (*Lilies*), by Kevin March and Michel Marc Bouchard, and Chant Libres' *The Trials of Patricia Isasa* by Kristin Norderval and Naomi Wallace. The annual New Works Sampler, held at the Place des Arts, offered glimpses of American and Canadian recent premieres and works in development, from Neil Weisensel and Shane Koyczan's *Stickboy*, about the cyclical nature and brutality of bullying, to Ricky Ian Gordon and William M. Hoffman's *Morning Star*, about an immigrant family devastated by the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

At its annual Business Meeting, held during the conference, OPERA America elected Timothy O'Leary, general director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, as its new board chairman, replacing Frayda B. Lindemann, who takes on the role of immediate past chairman after completing her second term. Evan Hazell, trustee at Calgary Opera, was elected treasurer, and eight new members were chosen to serve three-year terms on the board: Ned Canty, general director, Opera Memphis; Michael Egel, general and artistic director, Des Moines Metro Opera; Laura Kaminsky, composer; Bill Palant, founder and managing director, Étude Arts; Jane DiRenzo Pigott, trustee, Lyric Opera of Chicago; Yuval Sharon, artistic director, The Industry; John G. Turner, trustee, Houston Grand Opera; and Dona D. Vaughn, artistic director, PORTopera, and director of opera programs, Manhattan School of Music.

The conference came to a close on Saturday with three general sessions, the first of which, "Global to Local — Strategies for Opera," featured Bernard Foccroulle, general director of the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, who described how his company's strategic plan addresses such issues such as balancing old and new repertoire, forging international collaborations, creating a culture of participation among attendees, and embracing amateur endeavors within the art form. Foccroulle was followed by Peter Gelb, general director of the Metropolitan Opera, who reflected on his 10 years at the helm of the nation's largest opera company. The last open session, a panel discussion on themes that emerged throughout the conference, included an invitation from Keith Cerny, general director and CEO of The Dallas Opera, to Opera Conference 2017, which will take place May 4 to 8 in Dallas.

To watch videos of select conference sessions, visit OPERA America's YouTube channel at youtube.com/OPERAAmerica. Resources from Opera Conference 2016 are available at conference.operaamerica.org. ●

PATRICIA K. JOHNSON

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YVES RENAUD

Clockwise from top left: Organizations showcase their products and services in the conference's Exhibit Hall. Film and stage director François Girard speaks at the Opening Assembly. A running club of conference attendees reaches the top of Montreal's Mount Royal. Christina Loewen, executive director of Opera.ca, and Laura Lee Everett, director of artistic services at OPERA America, welcome attendees to the New Works Sampler. Pierre Dufour, general director of Opera de Montreal, and Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America, at the Host Company Welcome Reception.

MISTER CHAIRMAN, TIMOTHY O'LEARY

"I have always loved OPERA America and its mission," says Timothy O'Leary, general director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and incoming chairman of OPERA America's board of directors. He has been associated with the organization since 2006, when he was in the first class of Leadership Advance, the precursor to today's Leadership Intensive program. Through OPERA America, he formed a key personal and professional connection with then-Board Chairman Charles MacKay; in 2008, he succeeded MacKay at the helm of OTSL. He was elected to a three-year term at OPERA America's June board meeting.

Looking ahead to his new responsibilities, O'Leary welcomes the opportunity to play a role in the organization's service to the industry and is especially enthused at the prospect of helping enhance OPERA America's research capabilities. "Opera companies are rightly prioritizing questions of inclusiveness and diversity," he says. "But we have miles to go by way of embracing and leading 21st-century American culture, and responding to the changing expectations of the arts-loving public. We in the field need better tools to do this, especially when it comes to research. I look forward to working with Marc Scorca to expand OPERA America's research capability and discover more about the changing behaviors of audience members.

"Even though traditional performing arts as a sector are undergoing enormous pressures, it's a golden age of creativity in American opera," says O'Leary. "And a lot of that is in the spirit of collaboration and forward thinking that OPERA America has fostered." ●

KEN HOWARD

INNOVATION REWARDED: BUILDING OPERA AUDIENCES GRANTS

OPERA America's Building Opera Audiences program, generously funded by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, recently awarded $300,000 in grants to eight Professional Company Members. This program, now in its fourth cycle of granting, funds innovative marketing projects that seek to build and retain informed, enthusiastic audiences for opera.

The following eight organizations received Building Opera Audiences grants:

Chicago Opera Theater
Breaking the Walls
Breaking the Walls will open doors to new audiences and create a cohesive network among patrons. The initiative will include a young-professional component that leverages relationships with other local opera and music companies; a series of related cultural events; and new methods of engagement with COT's mainstage productions.

Los Angeles Opera
DTLA Opera
DTLA Opera will use a life-size, mobile LED interactive touch screen to introduce the art form to young people who live in Downtown Los Angeles and those who work in the area. The touch screen will travel to iconic and popular indoor and outdoor locations, giving users the unique opportunity to watch and listen to selections from opera performances, play opera-themed games and learn about opera.

Michigan Opera Theatre
MOT Ambassadors
Drawing upon docent models used by museums, MOT will cultivate, train and empower volunteers to represent the company in communities across Michigan. By introducing the art form to culturally diverse audiences and building new regional and statewide relationships, these ambassadors will generate new interest in opera and increased ticket sales.

Opera on Tap
The Parksville Murders: *An Episodic Virtual Reality Horror Opera*
Based on the campy horror movies of the 1980s, *The Parksville Murders* is an episodic opera film that will be experienced in virtual reality. The opera, which will be shot on location in the hamlet of Parksville, New York, revolves around a group of sorority sisters (all sopranos) who embark on a weekend getaway, only to be categorically slaughtered in the woods.

Opera Philadelphia
Opera Philadelphia Festival Mobile App
Opera Philadelphia will create a mobile app for audiences attending "O17," the company's 12-day urban opera festival debuting in September 2017. The app will enable attendees to navigate their festival experience through personalized information and services, including event scheduling and notifications, dynamic mapping, interactive multimedia content, social media integration, and hospitality partner access.

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
"Bring the Kids!" Matinees
OTSL will launch a family-focused pilot program offering child care during Saturday matinees throughout its 2017 festival season. Children will receive a fun, interactive, educational program inspired by the opera their parents are seeing, enabling both to enjoy age-appropriate opera experiences simultaneously.

San Diego Opera
Opera on Track
In response to transportation issues, SDO will encourage use of the local light rail system through a series of opera performances by young artists along three light rail lines. The initiative will highlight the light rail as means of traveling to the opera, while also generating interest in the company's fall production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*.

San Francisco Opera
SF Opera Lab Pop-Ups
SF Opera Lab, the experimental programming arm of San Francisco Opera, will host a series of Pop-Ups at unique venues around the Bay Area, introducing the "opera curious" to the art form in a casual way. Pop-Ups will consist of short, informal, artist-driven performances in hip alternative venues. Tickets will be offered at a low price point, and venues will be selected to expand the company's reach beyond the city limits. ●

$200,000 FOR FEMALE COMPOSERS

In the latest round of its Opera Grants for Female Composers program, supported by The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, OPERA America awarded grants totaling $200,000. Launched in 2013, the program consists of two granting components: Discovery Grants of up to $15,000, awarded directly to female composers for the development new works, and Commissioning Grants of up to $50,000, awarded to opera companies to support commissions from female composers. In this round, awarded in March, seven composers received Discovery Grants and seven Professional Company Members received Commissioning Grants.

Discovery Grants

The following composers received a total of $100,000 to support the development of their operas:

Julia Adolphe
Composer (Title TBA)

Adolphe's project is in the early stages of development. Additional information will be available at a later date.

Mary Ellen Childs
Composer, *On Beyond*
Libretto by Claire Porter

On Beyond weaves together the narratives of three women in aviation history: Bessie Coleman, the first African-American woman to earn a pilot's license; Jackie Cochran, a World War II pilot; and Jerrie Cobb, one of a group of women who underwent NASA testing in the 1960s.

Emily Doolittle
Composer, *Jan Tait and the Bear*
Libretto by Emily Doolittle and Peter Guy

This chamber opera is derived from a medieval Shetlandic folktale whose protagonist, Tait, offends a king and is sentenced to death. Tait is offered his freedom if he can kill a troublesome bear, but he recognizes the bear as a kindred spirit and instead saves both himself and the animal.

Nkeiru Okoye
Composer, *We've Got Our Eye On You*
Libretto by David Cote

We've Got Our Eye On You is loosely based on the ancient Greek myth of Perseus and the Gray Sisters, who share an external eyeball. Perseus intends to use his Olympian good looks to learn Medusa's whereabouts from the sisters but — as a Greek chorus asks — who's seducing whom?

Rene Orth
Composer, *Machine*
Libretto by Jason Kim

This chamber opera follows the narrative of an Asian-American scientist who elects to plant a chip in her brain and become the world's first perfect, emotionless human. This allows the scientist to achieve professional success, but at the cost of her individuality and humanity.

Elena Ruehr
Composer, *Crafting the Bonds*
Libretto by Gretchen Henderson

Crafting the Bonds, a full-length opera spanning three centuries, is inspired by the rediscovery of *The Bondwoman's Narrative* by Hannah Crafts, the first known novel by an African-American woman. The work fuses past with present to ask questions about the lives and afterlives of stories.

Laura Elise Schwendinger
Composer, *Artemisia*
Libretto by Ginger Strand

Artemisia is based on the life of Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi, the first woman member of the Accademia in Florence. Central to the story is Gentileschi's rape at age 16 by the painter Agostino Tassi, who was subsequently convicted of the crime but never served time.

Commissioning Grants

The following opera companies received a total of $100,000 to commission new operas by female composers:

American Opera Projects
Gulliver's Travels
Victoria Bond, composer
Stephen Greco, librettist

Based on the Jonathan Swift novel, this "mythological burlesque" uses music and animated objects to describe Gulliver's journeys through four strange and exotic countries. The opera, which is aimed at family audiences, is presented in four short acts without intermission.

Ardea Arts/Family Opera Initiative
Animal Tales
Kitty Brazelton, composer
George Plimpton, librettist

This two-act opera-musical describes an assortment of animals who visit the veterinarian, each wanting to change his or her life markedly. Told through song, dance and puppetry, the family-friendly work raises questions about how to accept differences, overcome stereotypes and find purpose and happiness in life.

Beth Morrison Projects
The Living Light
Sarah Kirkland Snider, composer
Nathaniel Bellows, librettist

The Living Light examines the life of Hildegard of Bingen, an 11th-century German Benedictine abbess who was a writer, composer, philosopher, Christian mystic and founder of natural history in Germany. The opera focuses on the time in Hildegard's life, beginning in 1141, when she first began writing down her mystic visions.

The Glimmerglass Festival
Title to be announced
Jeanine Tesori, composer
Tazewell Thompson, librettist

This opera tells the story of an African-American family — a father, mother and son — and a community torn apart when the boy is killed by gun violence. Neighbors proclaim injustice, and a chorus of black youths, representing murdered boys, attempts to make sense of the world they've departed.

Houston Grand Opera
Some Light Emerges
Laura Kaminsky, composer
Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed, librettists

In the mid-1960s, Houston art collector Dominique de Menil commissioned Mark Rothko to create a series of paintings, as well as the ideal gallery to house them. The resultant Rothko Chapel, which opened in 1971, is the setting for this chamber opera, which chronicles the intersections of five people who visit the chapel across four decades.

Opera Colorado
The Scarlet Letter
Lori Laitman, composer
David Mason, librettist

Based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1850 novel, *The Scarlet Letter* examines how individuals react to and survive severely repressive communities saturated with religious dogma. The story centers on Hester Prynne, a young woman in 17th-century Puritan Boston who has borne a child out of wedlock.

Opera Columbus
The Flood of 1913
Korine Fujiwara, composer
Stephen Wadsworth, librettist

The Flood of 1913 tells a story of human connection spurred by loss and shared tragedy. The Great Flood of 1913, the most catastrophic weather disaster in Ohio history, devastated Columbus' Franklinton neighborhood. Drawing upon historical accounts of the flood, the opera depicts the lingering impact of the disaster on multiple generations of a single family. ●

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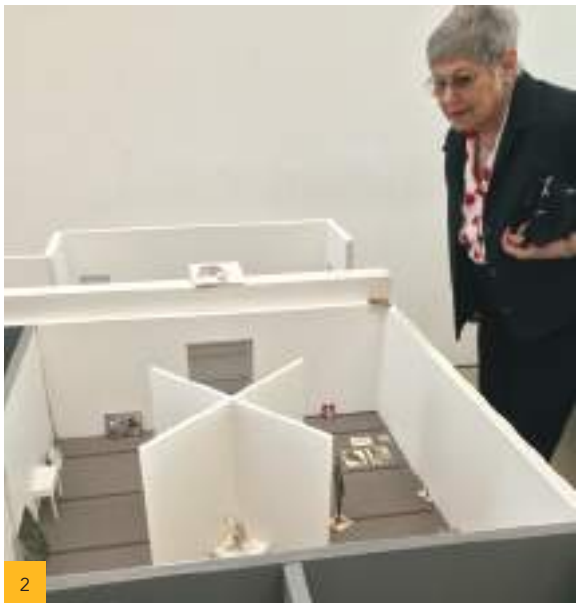
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LYNN LANE

OPERA AMERICA'S AMBASSADORS IN HOUSTON AND MONTREAL

Members of OPERA America's Ambassador Circle jetted to Houston for a long weekend this past March to enjoy the final performance in the world-premiere run of Carlisle Floyd's *Prince of Players* at Houston Grand Opera. In conjunction with the performance, Ambassadors enjoyed a behind-the-scenes look at the Wortham Center, home of HGO's mainstage theater, and joined the *Prince of Players* creative team for a celebratory pre-performance brunch.

While in Houston, the Ambassadors also took in the city's rich cultural scene. They attended a performance of the Houston Symphony featuring Beethoven's "Eroica" and Shostakovich's Concerto No. 1 for Piano, Trumpets and Strings; experienced the Menil Collection, one of the nation's preeminent art museums, with a private tour of the curatorial workshop; and visited the Rothko Chapel, a non-denominational chapel housing 14 of Mark Rothko's "black paintings." Between outings they sampled the city's finest culinary offerings, enjoying flavors of the Gulf Coast and Southwest, as well as a proper Texas barbecue.

In May, a group of Ambassadors again joined together for a weekend excursion, this time to Montreal for Opera Conference 2016. In addition to participating in conference sessions, the Ambassadors experienced two world premieres — Opéra de Montréal's *Les Feluettes* (*Lilies*) and Chant Libres' *The Trials of Patricia Isasa* — as well as OPERA America's own *New Works Sampler*, a performance showcasing new American and Canadian operas. Throughout the weekend, the group was warmly welcomed at several receptions, including one at McGill University's Schulich School of Music and another at the home of Bernard Stotland, chairman of Opéra de Montréal's board.

The Ambassador Circle is a group of dedicated opera lovers, patrons, artists, administrators and trustees whose generous gifts to OPERA America provide the foundation for services to the entire field. Previous Ambassador Travel destinations have included Glyndebourne, Venice and Berlin, and the group will be traveling this July to Southern Italy, where, among other things, members will take in two performances at the historic Teatro di San Carlo in Naples and explore the ruins of Pompeii. Trips in 2017 will include Santa Fe and Spain.

For more information about Ambassador Travel, contact Dan Cooperman, OPERA America's director of development, at 646.699.5266 or DCooperman@operaamerica.org, or visit operaamerica.org/Travel. ●

HOUSTON

1. A dinner at B&B Butchers & Restaurant, with (l–r) Lloyd Gerlach, Karin Eames, Jane Gross, John Shannon, Marc A. Scorca, Jan Serr, Perryn Leech and Jean Stark.
2. Jane Gross examining a curatorial scale model of the Menil Collection.
3. Carlisle Floyd's *Prince of Players* at Houston Grand Opera, with mezzo-soprano Sofia Selowsky (Nell Gwynn) and bass-baritone Federico de Michelis (Thomas Betterton).

MONTREAL

Reception at home of Opéra de Montréal Board Chairman Bernard Stotland:
4. Bernard and Merle Stotland, Marc A. Scorca, and Frayda B. Lindemann.
5. Pierre Dufour and Willa Bodman.
6. Rick Miners, Dan Cooperman, Elizabeth Scott and Pamela A. Pantos.
Tour and Reception at McGill University's Schulich School of Music:
7. Demonstration of the school's virtual acoustic technology.
8. Ronald and Barbara Leirvik, and Margee and Scott Filstrup.
9. Paul and Sylvia Lorton, and Patrick Corrigan.
10. Jerry Fisher and John Turner, and Sean Ferguson, dean of the school.

YVES RENAUD

4

YVES RENAUD

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YVES RENAUD

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TAM LAN TRUONG

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TAM LAN TRUONG

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TAM LAN TRUONG

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TAM LAN TRUONG

10

The *Lizzie Borden* design depicts the protagonist's grim circumstances and inner madness.

MURDER MOST FOUL: DIRECTOR-DESIGNER TEAM TACKLES *LIZZIE BORDEN*

OPERA America's Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase, a program supported by the Tobin Theatre Arts Fund, provides emerging opera artists with a national platform to introduce their work to industry leaders. Every two years, directors and designers are invited to submit production concepts for a select group of operas, and the most promising proposals receive funding for further development. From the most recent pool of applicants, four finalist teams were chosen to refine their production proposals and present them at Opera Conference 2015 in Washington, D.C. All four production prototypes were then scheduled for six-month rotating exhibitions at the National Opera Center, to take place through summer 2017.

The third exhibition of the rotation, which recently opened, is a production concept for Jack Beeson and Kenward Elmslie's *Lizzie Borden*, the 1965 opera based on the infamous 1892 axe murders in Fall River, Massachusetts. The creative team — director Andreas Hager, scenic designer Kate Noll, costume designer Seth Bodie and lighting designer Solomon Weisbard — have envisioned a production that draws clear connections between Lizzie's cruel environment and her internal anguish.

In his costumes, Bodie has created historically accurate ensembles that reflect the Bordens' late-19th-century mill-town milieu and the repression that characterized Victorian-era women. Noll's dark, looming, crooked sets serve as extensions of Lizzie's mental state. "The architecture is actually really unstable," says Noll. "It looks like it could fall at any minute, which reflects the pressures in Lizzie's mind."

"There's this tension between the naturalism of the space and the potential for extremity and expression, and that's true in the lighting, too," Weisbard adds. Both the lighting and scenery are at their most surrealistic during the production's climax, when Lizzie ascends the staircase to murder her parents: The walls and ceiling becoming semi-transparent and the act of Lizzie's revenge is depicted through colored lighting and shadows, all in step with the expression of the music.

The *Lizzie Borden* exhibition runs through December 2016. It is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase Gallery, located on the eighth floor of the National Opera Center. ●

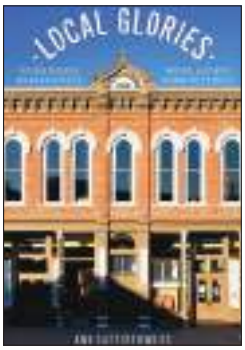
Visit OPERA America's YouTube channel at youtube.com/OPERAAmerica to watch the four finalist teams' presentations from Opera Conference 2015.

Applications for the 2017 Director-Designer Showcase will be available this summer. Visit operaamerica.org/Grants for more information.

PUBLICATIONS

LOCAL GLORIES: OPERA HOUSES ON MAIN STREET, WHERE ART AND COMMUNITY MEET

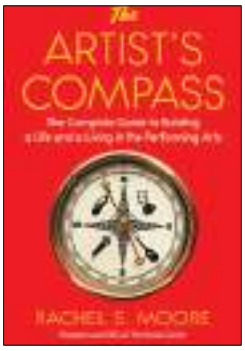
By Ann Satterthwaite
Oxford University Press



This volume explores how the thousands of opera houses that flourished across America in the 19th and early 20th centuries played vital creative, social and communal roles. Using case studies from Maine, Colorado, New York, Nebraska, Kentucky and Vermont, the author looks at how these theaters not only served as venues for varied entertainment — plays, opera, magic shows and circuses — but also aroused civic pride and reinforced local identity. The book closes with a look at the restoration and creative reuse of small-town opera houses in recent decades.

THE ARTIST'S COMPASS

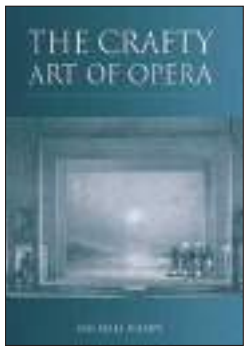
By Rachel S. Moore
Simon and Schuster



In this practical guide for artists, Los Angeles Music Center CEO Rachel S. Moore argues that performers can become more successful and secure by approaching their careers as entrepreneurs. Drawing upon her experiences as a dancer in American Ballet Theatre's corps de ballet and later the company's CEO, Moore shares hard-won lessons about making one's own success. She encourages every performer to develop marketing skills alongside creative talent. Testimonials from artists such as Lang Lang and Renée Fleming punctuate the volume.

THE CRAFTY ART OF OPERA

By Michael Hampe
Boydell Press



Drawing upon decades of experience as a director, Michael Hampe provides a glimpse into the techniques and rules that inform an opera's staging: the relationship between singers and their orchestra, the importance of space around singers, the gestures of languages and the primacy of sense over effect, among others. Filled with many anecdotes from the author's career, the book is aimed at opera lovers interested in the behind-the-scenes process of bringing an opera to life, as well as professionals who want to better understand their craft.

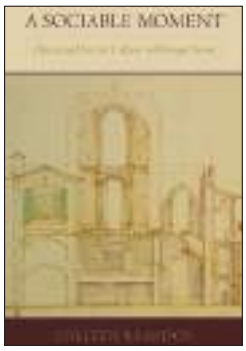
TECHNOLOGY AND THE DIVA: SOPRANOS, OPERA AND MEDIA FROM ROMANTICISM TO THE DIGITAL AGE

By Karen Henson, ed.
Cambridge Studies in Opera

This collection of essays by an interdisciplinary group of scholars surveys the relationship between operatic sopranos and technology from the first quarter of the 19th century through the modern era. The authors consider the soprano in her larger-than-life form — as the "diva" — and examine how her voice and allure have been created by various technologies and media, including stagecraft and theatrical lighting, journalism, the telephone, sound recording, and visual representations such as painted portraits and high-definition simulcasts.

A SOCIABLE MOMENT: OPERA AND FESTIVE CULTURE IN BAROQUE SIENA

By Colleen Reardon
Oxford University Press



After their military defeat by the Florentines in the mid-16th century, the citizens of Siena turned from politics to celebratory, social occasions to express their civic identity. In the first major work of its kind, the author opens a window on the ways in which the Sienese absorbed the new genre of opera into their culture and challenges the prevailing view that operatic productions in the city were merely an extension of Medici power to the provinces. She argues that it was instead the expatriate Chigi family who, on their triumphant visits home, coordinated Siena's operatic performances.

THE MEANING OF MUSIC

By Leo Samama
Translated by Dominy Clements
Amsterdam University Press

The author, a composer and musicologist, takes on broad questions about music's importance in human lives both past and present: What is music, and what does it mean to humans? How do we process it and how do we create it? Drawing upon his many years in music administration, including posts at the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Residentie Orchestra and the Netherlands Chamber Choir, Samama attempts to show that music is both a tool and a gift, serving as a unifying thread that runs throughout the cultural history of mankind.

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MY FIRST OPERA

BY LAWRENCE BROWNLEE


DAVID WHITE

My first opera wasn't one that I saw — I was *in* it. I had just gotten to Anderson University in Indiana, where I was going to study as a voice major, and I met another student in the hallway. "Hi, my name is Larry," I said, and she said, "Oh, you're Tamino!" I said, "What's a Tamino?" I had no idea that I had been cast in *The Magic Flute* — in fact, I didn't know what *The Magic Flute* was.

That same year, I actually got to see an opera for the first time: *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, at Indianapolis Opera. Unlike *The Magic Flute*, which we did with a piano in the school auditorium, this was a full-scale opera, in a place that was specifically set up for opera performances, with an orchestra and chorus, props, costumes, and lighting. All of these things told me "This is what opera is." When I was a kid, I thought opera was all fat ladies; that people broke glass when they sang; that you couldn't understand what they were saying because it was in a foreign language; and that it was boring. My view was changed by the fact that this was in English and you could understand what was going on. It let me know that opera could be enjoyable. That transformed me.

Rob Orth was Horace Tabor in that production. I met him backstage at Wolf Trap recently and told him about the impression that performance made. It was nice to be able to say, "You're part of the reason I'm here today." But I'm afraid I made him feel old!

I was studying voice because people said I had a gift that was appropriate to the world of opera. I was always musical: My mother told me that when I was a kid, I'd sing "Go Tell It on the Mountain" in my sleep. My father led the church choir, and if something was wrong — if somebody was slightly flat — I'd tell him, because it rang so strongly in my ear. I played drums, the bass guitar and the trumpet. The first time I was singled out for my voice was when I sang a solo in church at age 11 or 12. People were so positive about it that it made me nervous. To be honest, I hated singing in public at first, because I felt so exposed, but eventually I got over my shyness.

When I was a freshman in high school, in Youngstown, Ohio, I got the big solo in the Christmas chorus concert. My sisters couldn't believe it — they knew there were seniors who were *the* singers at school, but when I auditioned, the teacher gave me the solo on the spot. I had no idea what classical singing was about, but I could sing high and with intensity. I wanted to be a lawyer (with three older sisters, I was good at getting out of a pickle), so when people would talk to me about being an opera singer, I'd think "Opera — are you *nuts*?" But my senior year I got into a program for gifted high school musicians to study with graduate students at Youngstown State University. At the end of the year, there was a recital for all of us, and I got an overwhelming response from the audience. Afterwards, a Youngstown professor came up to me and said, "I don't know who you are, but you need to pursue this."

When people would talk to me about being an opera singer, I'd think "Opera — are you nuts?"

My sophomore year at Anderson University, I entered the regional competition of NATS, the National Association of Teachers of Singing. I sang "Ecco, ridente" from *The Barber of Seville* and it was fine. I could sing high and I could sing fast. But there was a baritone in my age group who also had a good voice, only his singing was more refined, more detailed and more captivating from a dramatic standpoint. He won first place in our category; I won third place. But I wasn't discouraged: I thought, "I'll see that guy next year."

The experience made me realize that singing opera is about a lot more than having a good voice and a high C. It's a deeper thing. It's about inhabiting the character and making the role a part of you. That was the era when The Three Tenors were selling out stadiums. I saw Carreras, Domingo and Pavarotti on television and their eloquence overwhelmed me — without understanding a word of what they were singing, I knew what they were *saying*.

For the next NATS competition, I prepared "Che gelida manina" from *Bohème*. It's not right for me, but I knew I could sell it well. But I also knew I had to take all of it very seriously. I spent a year working on that aria. It wasn't just a matter of memorizing the words and music: I had to take ownership of what I presented to the audience.

On the bus ride to the competition, I thought, "Maybe the guy who was so good last year won't be there." But when we got there — guess who was the first person I ran into. So we did the preliminary round, then the finals, and I sang my heart out. Well, this time around I won. Not only did I win in my category; at the end of the ceremony they gave out an award for the overall competition. When they read out the name "Larry Brownlee," I couldn't believe what was happening.

The difference between the two competitions was that now I had a real idea about what makes opera special. Afterward one of the teachers came up to me and said, "You have to keep doing this. You were born to sing." I took her advice, and from there I never looked back. ●

Lawrence Brownlee, *one of the world's leading bel canto tenors, has sung the works of Rossini and Bellini on the world's leading opera stages, including the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, the Bavarian State Opera, Royal Opera Covent Garden and the Vienna State Opera. He recently appeared in the New York premiere of* Charlie Parker's Yardbird *—the first opera ever to be staged in the legendary Apollo Theater.*

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