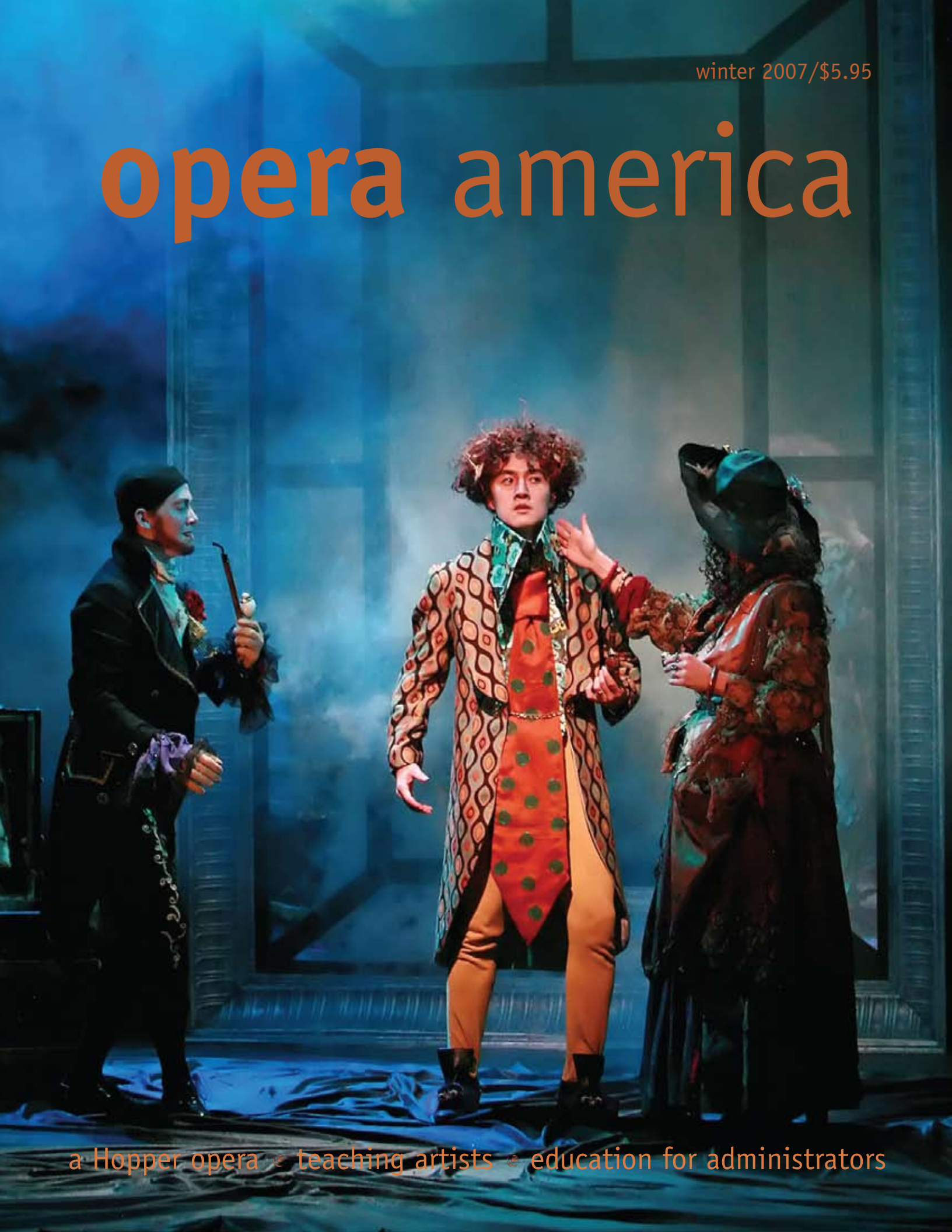


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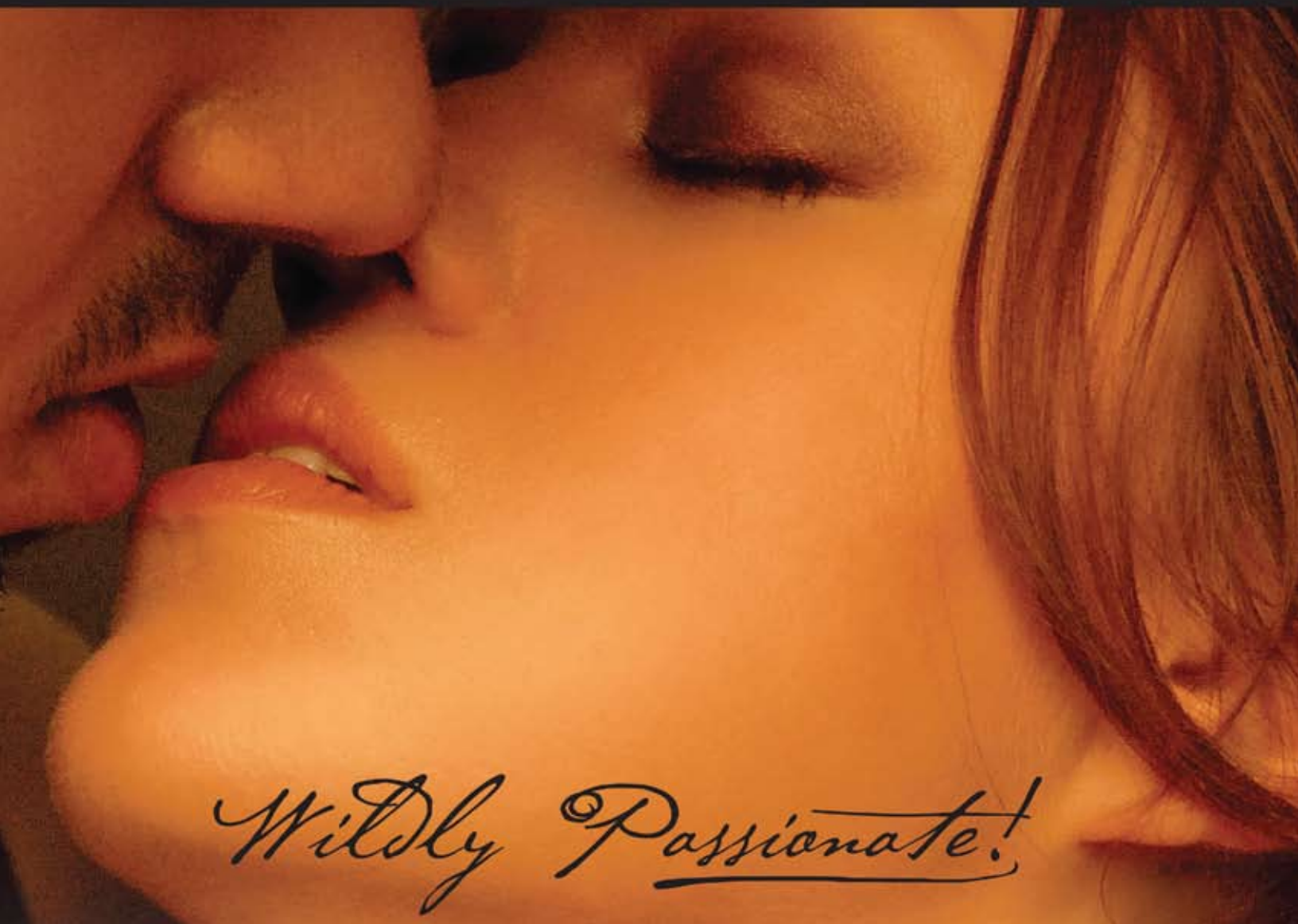
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The magazine of OPERA America — the national service organization for opera, which leads and serves the entire opera community, supporting the creation, presentation and enjoyment of opera.

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This issue of *Opera America* is dedicated to a broad range of education topics reflecting our shared dedication to introducing a new generation to the art form as audiences, artists and administrators. As committed as we are to the subject, however, many of us think that education — even in its broadest terms — takes place in “another department,” or at universities or only at a certain point in a person’s life. I invite you to read the articles in this issue of the magazine not as a passive observer of the ways other people teach and learn, but as a purposeful participant in your own learning and of those around you.

How do we learn as individuals? Kelley Rourke’s article tracks the formal and informal training of select opera administrators — most of whom benefitted from mentors and coaches over the years. Mentoring and coaching never stops. When I speak to colleagues seeking guidance, I frequently recommend they establish a small “personal board of directors” comprising a few trusted friends and colleagues who understand their occasional role as providers of advice. I also harken back to a workshop I attended in which a working group partner recommended that I read magazines selected randomly from airport newsstands to enjoy the benefit of new ideas from completely unrelated areas of endeavor. (Some of the best articles on workplace safety can be found in boating magazines!)

After a busy autumn of travel across the country, Canada and Europe, I’ve reflected on the dynamics of organizational learning. I’ve been struck by the ability of some opera companies to improve performance — managerially and artistically — year after year. What are the common characteristics of organizations that seem to improve steadily? Strong, consistent leadership at the staff level, supported by skilled board members, is an essential. Further qualities include a combination of bold action and cautious analysis, knowledge of opera/arts management combined with an appetite for drawing lessons from other fields, and a healthy balance of rotation at the board and staff levels balanced with longevity of service — a hidden asset that enables the company to refine systems over time and convey accumulated knowledge to colleagues and successors.

How does the field learn? The answer to this question touches the very core of OPERA America itself. Our membership includes hundreds of organizations, each of which is a laboratory that tests new ideas for community programs, marketing initiatives, development strategies, training techniques and more. OPERA America is the agent through which the results of thousands of experiments can be collected, analyzed and disseminated back to the field — hopefully to stimulate another round of experimentation and learning.

A commitment to learning implies an unspoken imperative in the arts — to become better at what we do every season. The motivation to surpass past accomplishment is a fuel for our industry. I hope you enjoy this education issue and take a moment to reflect on all the ways you and those around you keep learning.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marc A. Scorca".

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO



Jane Redding as Tyrania and Randall Scotting as Oberon in Des Moines Metro Opera's production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Photo by Duane Tinkey.

“THE CHANCE TO BRING EVEN MORE VOICE TEACHERS AND OPERA PROFESSIONALS TOGETHER TO SHARE IN THE DIALOGUE SEEMED TO BE THE LOGICAL NEXT STEP.”

For the past two years, OPERA America's Singer Training Forum has brought together those who teach singers at every stage of their development, along with those who hire and manage them. From the very first meeting, it has been apparent that these professionals are fiercely committed to the same goals, but they often lack an understanding of the challenges faced by their colleagues in other areas of the industry.

Michael Egel, artistic administrator of **Des Moines Metro Opera**, was so inspired by the discussions that he worked with his local chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) to give voice teachers a glimpse into his company's apprentice program. In June 2007, NATS members had the opportunity to attend coachings, rehearsals, a scenes concert and mainstage performances, giving them a better understanding of what their students faced upon entering the professional world. The weekend also included sessions on vocal health, Alexander Technique, audition skills and repertory for young singers.

Central to the weekend was a panel discussion, "Singer Training in America Today," for which moderator Marc A. Scorca was joined by Dale Johnson and Floyd Anderson (The Minnesota Opera), Robert L. Larsen (Des Moines Metro Opera and Simpson College), JoElla Todd (University of Missouri-Columbia) and William Farlow (University of Wisconsin-Madison). "We weren't able to solve all the issues, but just being able to articulate them to a larger group was important," said Egel. "Much like dropping a pebble in a pool of still water to observe the ripples working their way to the outer banks, the chance to bring even more voice teachers and opera professionals together to share in the dialogue seemed to be the logical next step."

The weekend, which was co-hosted by NATS, drew 30 registrants from Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Illinois, as well as a number of young singers. The collaboration with NATS was crucial, according to Egel: In addition to providing a grant from their discretionary fund, the organization was instrumental in encouraging voice teacher participation. "Why did it take us so long to think of it? I simply cannot answer that question," wrote NATS President Martha Randall. "The generation of new ideas — sometimes obvious ideas — is one of the outcomes of OPERA America forums," noted Scorca. "Collective intelligence makes each one of us smarter." 🍷

EMERGING WORKS FOR EMERGING PERFORMERS

Universities are engaged in research and development for many fields — why not for opera? An increasing number of university opera programs are commissioning new works, organizing workshops and readings for works in progress and mounting subsequent productions of important 20th- and 21st-century operas.

Fall 2007 saw many productions of new works at academic institutions, including Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* at **University of Colorado at Boulder**, the world premiere of Granger's *Bluebeard's Waiting Room* at **Georgia State University**, and Adamo's *Little Women*, along with scenes from the fairy tale operas of Richard Faith, at **University of Northern Colorado**. Composer Libby Larsen was in residence at **University of North Carolina at Greensboro** for workshops of her opera *Picnic*, which was commissioned by the university.

This month, **Manhattan School of Music** will finish its semester with performances of Foss's *Griffelkin*. In January, **Eastman School of Music** will pair Hoiby's *This is the Rill Speaking* with Menotti's *The Medium*, and Peak Performances (**Montclair State University**, New Jersey) will host performances of *Elmer Gantry*, fresh from its Nashville Opera premiere. **Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music** will present Liebermann's *Miss Lonelyhearts* in February, along with Catán's new chamber arrangement of *Rappaccini's Daughter* (which premiered in 1991) in May. In April, Rorem's *Our Town* — commissioned by a consortium of universities and opera companies — will be performed at **The Juilliard School**. 🎭



Daniel Anderson as Candide, Jami Rhodes as The Old Lady, and Terrance Brown as Cacambo in a rehearsal for Louisiana State University's production of Bernstein's *Candide*. Photo by Jason Peak.



Opera Boston's production of Handel's *Alceste*. Photo by Clive Grainger.

“A YOUNG ORGANIZATION HAS EVERYTHING TO GAIN FROM COLLABORATION.”

Opera Boston has distinguished itself in a crowded arts market by — paradoxically — collaborating. The collaborations have taken many forms, including Opera Unlimited, a new music festival created with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project that has featured such works as Peter Eötvös’s *Angels in America*.

In February 2008, Opera Boston will collaborate with Boston Baroque on a production of *Semele*, directed by Sam Helfrich and conducted by Boston Baroque’s Martin Pearlman. The two companies first worked together on a production of *Alceste* in 2004. Although the collaboration was artistically motivated — Opera Boston wanted an experienced period instrument ensemble in the pit — Charnow noted other positive outcomes: “It made marketing happy, as Boston Baroque has a very established audience.” Boston Baroque, in turn, benefited from the opportunity to offer staged opera to its audience.

The two companies shared responsibility for all aspects of the *Alceste* production — from artistic decisions to fundraising. For *Semele*, there is a significant difference: “This time, we are hiring their orchestra, chorus, conductor, music librarian,” said Charnow, who noted that the actual working relationship is not any less collaborative — she and Pearlman agreed on the stage director and soloists. However, she pointed out, “With a 50/50 collaboration, the question is, who has the final word? I’ve found it really important to know who’s boss. That’s not to say you have to be bossy. But if everybody knows who’s in charge, then everybody can relax. I think this structure is healthy. It also relieves Boston Baroque of some of the responsibility; we can collaborate throughout the process, but in the end they get to focus on what they do best. They ensure the highest musical values, and we take care of the production.”

“A young organization has everything to gain from collaboration,” said Charnow. “You learn from institutions that are more experienced in a particular area, and you also stand to gain from their reputation. What’s going to be interesting and challenging, as we become more mature, is to figure out what kind of collaborations we want. In the case of both *Angels in America* and *Alceste*, we partnered with other organizations because we wanted to try something new. As we become able to do more things ourselves, we may collaborate in different ways.” 🍷

WINTER REPERTOIRE HIGHLIGHTS

The first new opera of the new year will debut at **Houston Grand Opera** on February 29: Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *Last Acts*, based on a play by Terrence McNally, will star mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade. Those who missed the recent premieres of John Adams's *Dr. Atomic* (at **San Francisco Opera**) and David DiChiera's *Cyrano* (at **Michigan Opera Theatre**) will have an opportunity to catch performances at **Lyric Opera of Chicago** and **Opera Company of Philadelphia**, respectively. Other performances of North American works on the horizon include Ricky Ian Gordon's *Orpheus & Euridice* at **Long Beach Opera**, Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars* at **Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh** and Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* at **The Atlanta Opera**.

The **Metropolitan Opera** will introduce a new production of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* in February, directed by the Tony award-winning John Doyle; on the other coast, **Sacramento Opera** will stage the composer's *The Turn of the Screw*. The work of contemporary British composer Jonathan Dove will be represented this winter with performances of *Flight* at **Pittsburgh Opera** and *Tobias and the Angel* at **Opera Vivente** (Baltimore, MD).

Los Angeles Opera will continue "Recovered Voices," its exploration of music by composers suppressed by the Nazis, with a double-bill of Alexander Zemlinsky's *The Dwarf (Der Zwerg)*, based on Oscar Wilde's *The Birthday of the Infanta*, and Viktor Ullmann's *The Broken Jug (Der zerbrochene Krug)*, taken from a comedy by the Romantic German poet Heinrich von Kleist.

The **Minnesota Opera's** production of *The Fortunes of King Croesus* will introduce Twin Cities audiences to the music of Reinhard Keiser, a contemporary of Handel. In December, International Member **Opera Australia** will present *Alcina*, and in February, **Portland Opera** will present *Rodelinda*.

To learn more about upcoming member productions, visit the *Schedule of Performances* at www.operaamerica.org, where you can search by date, title, composer, company and state, as well as learn more about casting and creative teams. 🌐



Anthony Dean Griffey in the title role of the Metropolitan Opera's production of Britten's *Peter Grimes*. Photo by Nick Heavican/Metropolitan Opera. Background image (Hastings) by Aitken Jolly Photo.

A CLASSROOM EXERCISE WITH REAL-WORLD CONSEQUENCES

Edmonton Opera Association once counted on a significant revenue stream from set rentals. According to Director of Production Richard Sims, that income has all but vanished: Although the company is sitting on a valuable cache of rental scenery, it is far north of the highest concentration of the rental market, so the cost of transportation has put them out of business. In discussion with David Grindle, production manager and instructor at Indiana University (IU), Sims posited that the problem might be addressed by relocating the scenic stock to a more central location. However, as a one-man production department, Sims didn't have the time to research the options. Grindle had an idea: Why not design a student project around the question?

Working with three IU undergraduate stage management students and three graduate design students, Grindle reviewed the principles of scenery rental and the associated costs of storage, loading and maintenance. With the help of the OPERA America Online Production Directory, the group determined which opera company theaters could accommodate Edmonton's sets. They then identified nine cities with the highest market potential. The students contacted the Economic Development and Business Bureaus in each city to determine warehouse vacancy and average rental rates. They also contacted the IATSE business agent in each city to inquire about loading rates.

After narrowing potential locations to three, the students looked into warehouse vacancy rates, average warehouse cost per square foot (with and without climate control), availability of scene shops for standard maintenance and air connections to Edmonton. To determine the likelihood of a cooperative agreement with the local opera companies, students looked at production histories to see which companies had previously used Edmonton scenery or sets by designers of Edmonton scenery. After identifying an ideal location and developing a mock board presentation, the students turned their materials over to Sims, who has taken the proposal to the Edmonton Opera board.

Whether or not Edmonton Opera decides to move its warehouse, the students benefited from a classroom exercise with real-world consequences, and Edmonton Opera gained the services of seven part-time researchers. This type of collaboration between universities and the professional world has been going on in science and business for many years. Such partnerships have the potential to offer new solutions for organizations and allow students to leave school with practical knowledge they can take into the field. 🌐



Edmonton Opera Association's 2006 production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Set design and photograph courtesy of Peter Dean Beck.



The Dallas Opera's 2007 production of Donizetti's *Mary Queen of Scots*. Photo by Karen Almond, The Dallas Opera.

DALLAS OPERA CELEBRATES FIFTY YEARS

Fifty years ago, **The Dallas Opera** was launched with a gala concert by Maria Callas. As the company celebrates its golden anniversary, it can look back at a history in which great singers have remained at the company's core. Dallas audiences saw the American stage debuts of Joan Sutherland, Luigi Alva, Teresa Berganza, Montserrat Caballé and John Vickers, among others. In November 2007 the company marked the anniversary of its opening with a concert featuring Renée Fleming.

Fleming's reigning diva status says much about how the opera industry has changed in the past half-century. While the company still counts many international stars on its roster, Director of Artistic Administration Jonathan Pell observed that it's no longer necessary to look overseas for star power. The company has engaged many important American singers, and has found plenty of Texas-sized talents in its own backyard. For nearly 20 years, The Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition has provided opportunities for young singers who were born in the Lone Star State, or who study or live there. "One would think that would be limiting," said Pell, "but it is amazing how many singers come out of Texas." Past winners include Clifton Forbis, Mary Dunleavy, Erin Marie Wall, Garrett Sorenson and Latonia Moore.

The competition is The Dallas Opera's principal opportunity for young singers. "There were so many other companies offering young artist programs, and unless we could offer something different, there didn't seem to be a point," said Pell, who noted that the lack of a large program also happens to give the company more flexibility in casting: "Many times, a company has a vested interest in filling smaller roles with members of their program, who are sometimes forced into repertoire for which they are not suited. Roles like Suzuki and Goro can really make a production, and we are able to bring in appropriate people."

"The company was founded on the premise that opera is theater," said Pell, who pointed out that director Franco Zeffirelli made his American debut in Dallas, and John Houseman staged his first opera there. "The ideal is a balance between music and theater, but I think musical values have always taken a slight precedence here. Sometimes we have had to do something simpler in terms of a set, but when an opera has a *banda*, we have a *banda*. Years ago, Terry McEwan said opera is all compromise; the difference between good and great is in the compromises you choose. Our roster is a virtual who's who of the most important singers of the past 50 years, and that's something of which we are extremely proud." 🍷



Music! Words! Opera! at Opera Carolina. Photo courtesy of Laura Cook.

“IT WAS GREAT TO BE ABLE TO SHARE MY NEW-FOUND LOVE FOR OPERA WITH 75 NINE-YEAR-OLDS.”

For nearly 15 years, **Opera Carolina** has used *MUSIC! WORDS! OPERA!* to help young people in grades K-12 discover the power of the arts by creating and producing their own opera. (Only one company, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, exceeds Opera Carolina’s track record with the curriculum.) Teresa Robertson, Opera Carolina’s director of education and community relations, has collaborated with

many talented teachers over the years, but Laura Cook stands out. She has successfully integrated the curriculum at not one, but two schools. Cook said she was not immediately drawn to *M!W!O!*: “Teresa gave her spiel, and I listened, but I wasn’t a big opera fan at that point.” However, at the urging of a colleague, she decided to give *M!W!O!* a try.

Because any story can be an opera, there are opportunities for alignment with curriculum standards in a range of subject areas — North Carolina student composers and librettists have explored topics ranging from the Civil War to immigration, often using literary works as a jumping-off point. At one school, Cook worked with fourth-graders to create an opera about Blackbeard. The topic offered connections to both local history and current events, as a ship believed to have belonged to the pirate had been found recently off the coast of North Carolina.

Cook also studied *Turandot* with her students in preparation for an Opera Carolina performance. “It was great to be able share my new love of opera with 75 nine-year-olds,” said Cook. At her new school, administrators were skeptical that she would be able to interest enough children in opera performances to fill a bus — in the end, Cook brought not one, but two busloads of children to see *Madama Butterfly*.

Although Cook is a musician by training, she found herself more engaged by the production process than the composition process when working with *M!W!O!*: “My favorite part was the rehearsals, when the props got onto the stage, when they put on the costumes, when a pianist was actually playing the music we wrote.” At the end of the project, a thorough evaluation and assessment demonstrated what Cook instinctively felt: “It really showed the students’ incredible growth through the process — not just musically and artistically, but in teamwork, cooperation and community.” 🍷



Jason Hardy as Leporello and Stacey Rishoi as Donna Elvira in Orlando Opera's 2007 production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Photo by Andy Howard, courtesy of Orlando Opera Company.

ORLANDO OPERA COMPANY'S GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

In 1958, the Junior League of Greater Orlando hosted its first Opera Gala at the Orlando Municipal Auditorium. Since that humble beginning, **Orlando Opera Company** has gone on to produce 60 operas and present numerous opera luminaries in concert. In addition to beloved masterworks of the 18th and 19th centuries, the company's repertory has ranged from early gem *The Coronation of Poppea* to such 20th-century classics as *The Threepenny Opera*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Susannah*, *Trouble in Tahiti* and *Porgy and Bess*. By the 2006-2007 season, Orlando Opera Company's audience included opera fans from four countries, 31 states and 33 Florida counties.

The company opened its 50th anniversary season in November with a new production of *Don Giovanni*, set in New Orleans during the city's period of Spanish rule. As stage director Robert Swedberg explained, "We imagined that Giovanni might have wanted to amplify his list of conquests by coming to the new world; Elvira could have followed him to New Orleans, allowing them to have their first confrontation on the dock. Donna Anna and Donna Ottavio could be Spanish nobility residing in the city, with the Commendatore as a necessary military presence. It all clicked into place." He noted that images typically associated with New Orleans had a natural place in the opera — carnival masks, a cemetery, a lavish Creole banquet. "The setting also allowed us to consider some things that would not typically be part of a *Giovanni* production, such as voodoo elements." A series of events around the production of *Don Giovanni* were part of the anniversary celebration — galas, a discussion panel and a concert of arias featuring young American singers and a 50-member chorus. The company has also commissioned an anniversary photomosaic — made up of 2,304 images from the company's history — by Rob Silvers, who created similar images for the covers of *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Life* magazines.

The anniversary season, which has been generously underwritten by Darden Restaurants Foundation, will continue with productions of *Die Fledermaus*, *Turandot* and *Little Women*. "We are so pleased to be reaching the milestone of 50 years of existence during which we have brought the unique and special magic of opera to Central Florida," said President and CEO Jim Ireland. "We look forward to the next 50, with particular emphasis on outreach/education, professional training, and artistic enhancement . . . growing with the city of Orlando and setting our sights on the opening of our community's new Dr. P. Phillips Performing Arts Center in the fall of 2012." 🍷



Rindy O'Brien.

Rindy O'Brien: American Arts Alliance Director

Having served as a senior policy advisor in the U.S. Senate, an appropriations staff member and a vice-president and policy director of a national environmental organization, Rindy O'Brien is no stranger to politics. As the new director of the American Arts Alliance (AAA), she will work in coalition with OPERA America and five other national service organizations with a total of 4,100 organizational members nationwide to develop policy strategy for the performing arts field. Haley Gordon, OPERA America's government affairs director, recently interviewed O'Brien about her experience, the challenges she faces and her vision for the 30-year-old organization.

What is the biggest challenge for the Alliance?

We know a lot of people enjoy and support performing arts at a very local level and in a community-based environment. The challenge is to take that support and turn it into more visible support in Washington, with congressmen, senators and the White House. We need to change the perception that the arts are just for the wealthy or frivolous. We all strive to increase access to the arts for all Americans by better telling our stories, becoming leaders in our hometowns and connecting the dots for our policy leaders and politicians.

What is one of your goals as a new director of an old organization?

I would like to develop some exciting new ways to increase support and political clout for the performing arts world. We need to raise visibility and outreach to increase our political policy strength. The Alliance has over 4,100 organizational members — if every staff and board member were to contact his or her congressman and senators regularly, the performing arts field would be a stronger political voice in Washington.

How do you think we can activate the field?

We need to demonstrate to our members how their voice matters in Washington. In the coming year, I hope the Alliance can use new media, like social networking Web sites, to engage our members and the press. Politicians from all viewpoints can embrace the arts, which impact our communities in the most positive ways. This June, performing artists will come together at the National Performing Arts Convention in Denver to define an activists' agenda for the performing arts. The Alliance will create the advocacy tools to connect our voices into one powerfully performing company for change.

How does the American Arts Alliance help promote arts education?

The Alliance is engaged in a number of ways to promote arts education. For the last seven years, funding for arts education programs at the Department of Education has been left out of the President's budget. The Alliance, as part of the arts education working group, has worked with Congress to successfully reinstate this funding every year. Currently, there are efforts to reform the No Child Left Behind Education Act. Even in an environment where test scores are paramount, we believe the arts must remain an essential part of education: Innovation and imagination fuels our nation's future. The Alliance plans to call on its membership to become teachers themselves, creating a vibrant voice for arts education during the Presidential election cycle in 2008. 🍷

Arizona Opera's new hires include **Lisa Bury** as senior director of development and **Roberto Mauro** as senior director of artistic operations. Bury and Mauro come to Arizona from Lyric Opera of Chicago and Michigan Opera Theatre, respectively. Bury worked with Lyric Opera of Chicago for 13 years. Most recently she served as the director of corporate, foundation and government support, and was responsible for the strategic planning and solicitation of the company's institutional annual campaign contributions totaling nearly \$6 million. As senior director of artistic operations, Mauro will direct the planning, budgeting and execution of mainstage productions, Marion Roose Pullin Opera Studio productions and educational school tours and programs, as well as concerts and other special events.

Ryan Taylor joined **Berkshire Opera** as general director on October 2. Taylor will collaborate with Music Director Kathleen Kelly in the development of the company's artistic roadmap, oversee all aspects of the day-to-day operations, and cultivate increased visibility and financial support for the company through both corporate and individual donors, as well as increased giving from public and private foundations. Taylor has served as the co-founder and general director of the Southeastern Festival of Song (SFoS) since 2003 and is an accomplished vocalist with over 30 roles to his credit.

Florida Grand Opera (FGO) has appointed **Judy Drucker** to the post of senior artistic advisor. Drucker will create a new concert series featuring internationally acclaimed singers, projected to begin in the 2008-2009 season. In addition, Drucker is part of the artistic team, working

closely with the music director and general director to make suggestions on repertory and singers. Drucker came to FGO after celebrating her 40th anniversary as founding artistic director of the Concert Association of Florida, where she presented artists including Luciano Pavarotti, Leonard Bernstein, Yo Yo Ma, Valery Gergiev, Beverly Sills, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Rolando Villazón, Maria Guleghina and Salvatore Licitra.

John Conklin will retire as **Glimmerglass Opera's** associate artistic director following the 2008 season, after 18 years with the company. Conklin has designed almost 30 sets for Glimmerglass Opera productions; his scenic designs have been seen on and off-Broadway, as well as at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, The Santa Fe Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, among many others. He has also designed for opera companies in Paris, Munich, Amsterdam and England.

Jane Hargraft has been appointed general manager of **Opera Atelier**; previously, Hargraft completed a successful five-year stint at the Canadian Opera Company as director of development (annual fund). Hargraft, a native of Port Hope, Ontario and graduate of Queen's University, is a life-long opera fan. Former General Manager **David Baile** left Opera Atelier to take the position of CEO of the International Society of Performing Arts (ISPA) in New York. Baile's six years of service to Opera Atelier provided financial stability, allowing the company to stage innovative productions, such as the April 2008 *Idomeneo*, the first time this Mozart production will be

performed on period instruments in Canada.

OPERA America has welcomed two new staff members. Membership and Development Manager **Paul Gosselin** attended The School for Film and Television and has appeared on *One Life to Live*, *As the World Turns*, and in promotional videos for *Guiding Light* and the 2007 *Daytime Emmy Awards*. **Evan Wildstein**, manager of education and adult learning programs, will work with opera education professionals to strengthen the field; in addition, he will manage OPERA America's education initiatives for youth and adults, including *Music!Words!Opera!* and Online Learning. Prior to joining OPERA America, Wildstein worked with the educational outreach divisions of both The Juilliard School and Tilles Center for the Performing Arts.

Colin Eatock has joined **Opera.ca** as manager of operations, a new position. Eatock will assume many of the day-to-day operating responsibilities while also strengthening communications, membership development and various program priorities. Micheline McKay will continue to provide leadership to Opera.ca in strategic planning, advocacy and the development of the *Canadian Opera Creation Fund*. Eatock has completed the requirements for his doctorate in musicology and has worked with performing arts organizations, such as the Canadian Opera Company, in development and communications. More recently, Eatock has written for such publications as *The Globe and Mail* and *Opera Canada*.

John Wehrle has been named general director of **Opera Omaha**. Most recently, he served as executive

director of Chattanooga Symphony and Opera. Prior to his time with Chattanooga, Wehrle held the position of music administrator and director of the Ensemble Young Artists' Program at Utah Opera. He received his M.F.A. from Carnegie Mellon University and his B.M. from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Opera Omaha has also announced that Artistic Director **Stewart Robertson** will resign at the end of the 2007-2008 season; due to existing commitments with Florida Grand Opera and Atlantic Classical Orchestra, Robertson feels he is unable to devote adequate time to the day-to-day responsibilities of an artistic director.

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (OTSL) has two appointments to its leadership team: **James Robinson** has been named artistic director and **Timothy O'Leary** will become the company's first executive director. Robinson, whose term as artistic director of Opera Colorado ends in September 2008, will be in residence as OTSL artistic director-designate for most of the 2008 season. He will assume full responsibilities as artistic director starting in 2009, when he will direct a new production of Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*. O'Leary, who will begin work with OTSL in January 2008, was most recently director of operations and planning at New York City Opera (NYCO), in charge of labor relations and reporting to NYCO's board chair and executive director as liaison to all departments of the company. He negotiated and managed all NYCO co-productions and rentals, and produced the company's Opera-For-All audience development program.

Charles MacKay will become **The Santa Fe Opera's** general director beginning October 1, 2008. MacKay,

currently general director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, succeeds Richard Gaddes, who is retiring. He comes to Santa Fe after 23 years in St. Louis, where he followed Gaddes as that company's general director. MacKay's career in music began at The Santa Fe Opera, first as a member of the opera orchestra and orchestra assistant. Subsequently, he held several administrative positions including box office manager, development manager and business manager. He is completing his second two-year term as chairman of the board of OPERA America.

Seattle Opera has named **Asher Fisch** as principal guest conductor. Fisch, the music director of the Israeli Opera, conducted Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* for Seattle Opera this past August. He was awarded the company's Artist of the Year award for the 2006-2007 season. Fisch will conduct Seattle Opera's second International Wagner Competition on August 16, 2008; he conducted Seattle Opera's first International Wagner Competition in 2006. In 2003, he made his Seattle Opera debut with *Parsifal* for the company's first production in Marion Oliver McCaw Hall. In addition to conducting responsibilities, he will also serve as a musical advisor to General Director Speight Jenkins.

Douglas Kinney Frost has been appointed as **Syracuse Opera's** first director of music, with a wide range of performing and administrative responsibilities. In addition to conducting some mainstage productions, he will serve as the company's chorus master, assistant conductor and principal coach and accompanist. In addition, he is both artistic and music administrator and will participate in programming the

mainstage season and Syracuse Opera Ensemble's education and outreach performances. Kinney Frost comes to Syracuse from Miami, where he served as the head of music staff and chorus master at Florida Grand Opera (FGO) for four seasons. Prior to his work at FGO, he served as associate conductor and chorus master for Utah Opera.

Mark J. Weinstein has been appointed as **Washington National Opera's** executive director, effective February 1, 2008. Weinstein is currently the general director and vice president of Pittsburgh Opera. He has an extensive background in both nonprofit and for-profit management. He joined Pittsburgh Opera in 1997 at a time when the company faced a large accumulated deficit. Under his leadership, the deficit was quickly erased, and the company's assets grew rapidly, from \$4 million in 1997 to an anticipated \$25 million by the end of the current season. Weinstein is a graduate, cum laude, of Carleton College and has an M.B.A. from the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration.

Daniel Beckwith has been appointed director of opera studies at **Westminster Choir College of Rider University** (Princeton, N.J.) His conducting career began in 1991 with Virginia's Norfolk Symphony; he has led productions at Houston Grand Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Glimmerglass Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Edmonton Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. He served as assistant to James Levine for six seasons at the Metropolitan Opera. Beckwith received a bachelor's degree in organ performance and a master's degree in choral conducting and church music from Westminster. 🌟



OPERA America's new Yamaha piano and a costume from the world premiere production of *Anna Karenina*, designed by Robert Perdziola and built by Eric Winterling. Photo by Katherine L. Ehle/OPERA America.

WE LOVE A PIANO

Frank & Camille's Keyboard Centers of West 57th Street have generously donated a new Yamaha baby grand piano to OPERA America. Located in the organization's office in New York City, the piano will become an integral element of OPERA America's programs, including *Making Connections*, a career development seminar series bringing together established and emerging artistic professionals. In addition to enhancing OPERA America's programming, the piano will be available to OPERA America members, who often use the organization's offices for artistic planning meetings when they travel to New York. Producers and composers now have a new venue in which to review and refine new works and works in progress.

Yamaha is the official piano of OPERA America.

APPAREL OFT PROCLAIMS THE CHARACTER

On October 10, 2007, OPERA America inaugurated a series of opera design exhibitions. The first, on display through January 18, features **Robert Perdziola's** costume renderings for the world premiere production of David Carlson and Colin Graham's *Anna Karenina*, as well as two completed costumes. The opera, which was co-commissioned by Florida Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Michigan Opera Theatre, was first performed in Miami in April 2007. The work of Canadian designer **André Barbe** will be featured in a new exhibit scheduled to open on January 24.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA: ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

The Electronic Media Forum is a new OPERA America service designed to encourage members to increase the number and scope of electronic media activities. OPERA America has engaged **Joseph H. Kluger** and **Michael Bronson** — each of whom has over 25 years of experience as an internationally recognized expert in the classical music industry on recordings, broadcasts, the Internet and other electronic media activities — to offer advice and assistance to member companies. The forum will meet twice each year; all Professional Company Members of OPERA America are invited to send a delegate to these discussions. The first session will take place in New York City on February 25 and 26, 2008. For more information, contact Megan Young (MYoung@operaamerica.org).

COME TOGETHER

The second **National Performing Arts Convention**, to be held in Denver, Colorado from June 10-14, 2008, will convene over 4,000 artists, arts administrators, trustees and volunteers. The Convention offers an opportunity to address issues facing the entire performing arts community. Speakers and presenters will include well-known luminaries such as Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... And Others Don't*.

Within the Convention, OPERA America will hold its annual *Opera Conference*, with opera-specific events, performances, speakers and workshops. Highlights will include performances of *The Rape of Lucretia* at Central City Opera and *Nixon in China* at Opera Colorado. The New Works Showcase and Lunch will acquaint listeners with the latest works composed for the opera stage; a separate session will feature two new bilingual operas for youth.

Pre-conference seminars for opera professionals will cover such topics as Understanding and Attracting Multicultural Audiences, Keeping Your Company in the Spotlight Year-Round and Current Issues in Electronic Media. The Convention and Conference will boast an array of sessions — cross-disciplinary and opera-specific — that speak to issues faced by arts leaders today.

Make plans now to attend this historic gathering of professionals in the performing arts.

Online registration for the National Performing Arts Convention will be available beginning Monday, January 7, at www.performingartsconvention.org.



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The University of Maryland's world premiere production of Musto's *Later that Same Evening*. Photo by Cory Weaver.

Later That Same Evening

Later That Same Evening, a new opera by composer John Musto and librettist Mark Campbell, was co-commissioned by the University of Maryland and the National Gallery of Art, and premiered in November 2007 at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. When announcing the commission, Susie Farr, director of the Center, commented that commissioning and developing new works is part of the mandate of a research institution such as the University of Maryland. Maryland Opera Studio, under the direction of Leon Major, takes this mandate seriously: the Studio has had readings of a number of operas in progress, commissioned two operas for student performance and helped two student composers create new work.

Later That Same Evening was inspired by the work of Edward Hopper and moves through a series of connected vignettes, each based on a painting. In the first scene, "Room in New York," we meet Elaine and Gus O'Neill, who both feel trapped by their pleasant middle-class life. Next, the recently widowed Estelle Oglethorp, depicted in "Hotel Window," nervously awaits a date. In "Hotel Room," the beautiful ballet dancer Ruth Baldwin writes to her beau, Joe Harland, that she is going home to Indianapolis. The dashing Ronaldo Cabral takes Estelle to a Broadway theater, depicted in "Two on the Aisle." They are joined in the scene by Elaine, who has given Gus's unused ticket to Jimmy O'Keefe, a tourist from Lynchburg. Sheldon and Rose Segal, an older couple, bicker comfortably as they wait for the show to begin. Valentina Scarcella, an elegant woman from Parma, is somewhat taken aback by the American cultural scene. Thelma Yablonski, the usherette, observes the offstage drama of the gathered characters, including Joe, who waits in vain for Ruth to show up. The characters scatter into the rainy night after the curtain comes down. Later, Thelma is sitting alone in "Automat" when Joe walks in.

The world premiere production was directed by Leon Major and conducted by Glen Cortese. The design team was Erhard Rom, scenic designer; David Roberts, costume designer; and Nancy Schertler, lighting designer. The cast included Maryland Opera Studio members Claire Kuttler as Elaine O'Neill, Andrew Adelsberger as Gus O'Neill, Melissa Schiel as Estelle Oglethorpe, Onyu Park as Ruth Baldwin, Eric C. Black as Ronaldo Cabral, Jenna Lebherz as Thelma Yablonski, Adam Hall as Jimmy O'Keefe and Jenny Chen as Valentina Scarcella. The same cast performed the opera at the National Gallery of Art, using limited props and scenery.



Edward Hopper (1882 - 1967)
Two on the Aisle, 1927
oil on canvas
Toledo Museum of Art, Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment,
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey



Edward Hopper (1882 - 1967)
Hotel Room, 1931
oil on canvas
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Erhard had the idea of setting the opera in a gallery space, which works on a number of levels. If we see a painting in a gallery and it touches us, it can make us ask questions about our own lives. When the characters in the opera look at the paintings, they trigger their own thoughts and questions, which trigger the scene. I would like to think that as audiences observe the characters looking at the paintings, this will trigger thoughts about their own lives.

In rehearsal, we discovered it was interesting if people didn't always leave the stage. There is always someone sitting alone — not necessarily lonely, just alone and thinking. So on one part of the stage a scene is being played out, but it is surrounded by these Hopper moments of solitude.

— Leon Major, Director



Edward Hopper (1882 - 1967)
Automat, 1927
oil on canvas
Des Moines Art Center, Iowa Permanent Collection



Edward Hopper (1882 - 1967)
Room in New York, 1932
oil on canvas
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden,
University of Nebraska, Lincoln; UNL- F.M. Hall Collection

We have the five images, and there is a moment in each section of the opera that specifically references each image. My goal is to evoke the feel of each painting with the light. Hopper's work often has people in shadow, eyes in the shadow of hats, etc. I tried to evoke that, to get the light right on the singer, to bring in a bit of the color of the picture. A lot is driven by the staging, too. In different areas of the stage, you'll have Gus outside and Ruth in her room and Estelle in a lobby. If Hopper were to paint that image, what would he do? We're trying to follow his visual language through the whole piece.

Hopper has inspired so many artists. The study of light in his work is amazing. If you look at his notes and sketches, for instance, you'll see him take direct and indirect light into account. It's very accurate. The detail, for instance, of reflected light that fills in the shadows — it takes on the colors of the surface it is reflecting from. It's always very clear where the source is, where the shadow for the source is, where the reflected light comes from.

— Nancy Schertler, Lighting Designer



Costume design renderings for The University of Maryland's world premiere production of Musto's *Later that Same Evening*. Costume design by David Roberts.

There are 11 characters in the opera, but not all of them are in the paintings. And Ruth, for instance, is in a slip in the painting, but we see her dressed later in the opera. The paintings are not always explicit — we rarely see anyone's feet or even the length of a dress — so in those cases there was more creative input from me. I found other Hopper paintings I could use as a sort of style guide.

The paintings we're using go all the way to the 1950s, but the libretto is specifically set in 1932. "Hotel Lobby" was painted in 1951, so I had to make it generic enough that it would be acceptable as 1932. Fortunately, Hopper's paintings are often lacking in detail, even the hairstyles, so that you can nudge things one way or the other.

Hopper almost always avoided pattern, so I avoided pattern in the garments — for the men I didn't use any pinstriped or plaid suits or anything like that. The tricky thing, when you blow up these images for the stage, is that there has to be enough detail, some kind of visual interest. In the paintings, you have brushstrokes — a red dress will have yellow highlights. Some of that can be addressed with the lighting, but I still thought about what might give a textural interest equivalent to brushstrokes. I found some wonderful velvet — red pile on yellow backing — that I think will give the right effect for the dress in "Room in New York." We also gave the dress a few details that don't show in the painting — a criss-cross back with some draping, so there is something to look at when she turns her back. I don't think it's too different from what Hopper would have imagined.

When you're working on a show with a specific visual inspiration, your hands are tied a little bit. But I was determined to keep it interesting, to find ways to play with color and texture. It's been fun to see how much I can make the clothes look like the paintings without getting boring.

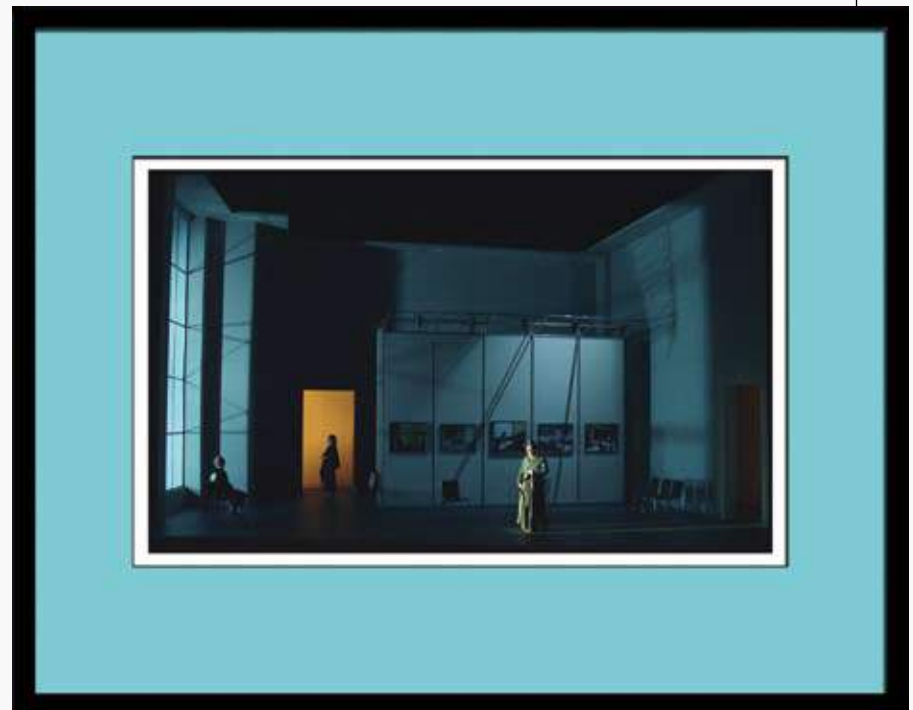
— David Roberts, Costume Designer

The libretto originally called for a minimum of three playing spaces, and there are actually more locations than that. I thought for a long time about how everything might work in our relatively small playing space. It became incredibly convoluted, with all these spaces and platforms. It was important to me that the design related back to the paintings — I felt that if we lost that relationship, we would lose the piece. When I think about Hopper, I think about solitude, mystery, the importance of light, especially side light. And then I thought, “What about doing it in a museum?”

Museums are mysterious places in their own way. You take art — the expression of ideas — and you put it behind glass, which is distancing, but it also allows people to get close and have very personal experiences with art. What I tried to do was create a museum space that is filled with mystery. There are doors, so there are rooms beyond the paintings, which may go on for miles. The idea of windows is very important in the opera, and there is the prevalence of side light in Hopper, so I put a huge window on stage right. Although there is no Hopper painting of a museum, I tried to make the space take on certain Hopper qualities.

The five paintings are on the wall. When characters come into the space, they are spectators in the museum, but they start to become the characters in the paintings. It's not very linear — the idea unravels and becomes more complicated, which I think makes it more interesting. It's a little bit Pirandello-esque. 🍷

— Erhard Rom, Scenic Designer



Set designs for The University of Maryland's world premiere production of Musto's *Later that Same Evening*. Set design and photos by Erhard Rom.

Learning to Lead

By Kelley Rowrke

Those who aspire to a career in law attend law school; those who aspire to a career in medicine attend medical school. Legendary leaders in the opera field have taken a variety of paths to their professional destinations — destinations that were, for some, unexpected. Whether they entered the field as stagehands or sopranos, most of these successful leaders have shown a knack for managing their own education, often identifying and seizing learning opportunities in the most unlikely situations.

Until fairly recently, few of opera's senior managers had formal academic training in management. As more and more colleges and universities offer study in the business of the arts, aspiring and established arts managers are increasingly taking advantage of them. However, there appears to be no consensus on a single "best way" to acquire the myriad skills it takes to run an opera company — or a department within one. Interviews with a number of senior managers within the opera field revealed a variety of approaches to managing one's education — both inside and outside the classroom.

Going Back to School

Kevin Patterson, general director of **Austin Lyric Opera**, spent several years working in production at opera companies before deciding to go back to school for an M.B.A. (His undergraduate degree is in voice.) "When I was at Palm Beach Opera, I saw that the production world was requiring more and more financial knowledge. Instead of budgeting a year in advance, we were looking two to four years down the road. There were accounting questions, marketing issues. I realized it was the optimal time to get an M.B.A." Patterson returned to his hometown for school and was able to supplement his classroom study with valuable real-world experience: "I had the opportunity to work for my older brother, a doctor who was putting together his own practice. I worked for him doing IT, marketing, event planning, presentations — I worked daily with the business manager. That experience, coupled with the M.B.A., taught me so much."

Susan Danis, executive director of Sarasota Opera, had no intention of applying her M.B.A. to a career in opera; she planned to go corporate. This turned out to be difficult: "It was the late 80s, there were no jobs, and M.B.A.s were a dime a dozen." After a brief stint on the west coast, Danis said, "I ended up in upstate New York, where there was this opera company that needed a managing director." Danis took the job — at Lake



If you go into a situation afraid
someone will discover that you
don't know everything, you're sunk.

George Opera — and has been in the field ever since. “People ask me all the time if they should get an M.B.A. I don’t think it will ever hurt you to know how to read a balance sheet, to have a sense of strategy. Business school teaches you to think in a certain way, to develop critical thinking skills.”

Timothy O’Leary, who will become executive director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in January 2008, began thinking about getting an advanced degree while he was working as a stage director. “When you’re in an opera rehearsal, you’re in the room with all of these people who have tremendous educational backgrounds — singers, conductors, coach/accompanists — it seemed funny to me that administrators should have to just learn everything they need on the job.”

When he began a full-time master’s program in theater management, O’Leary was also the only year-round, full-time employee at Gotham Chamber Opera. Although it was challenging to balance academic demands with professional ones, the combination had its advantages: “On the day I realized I needed a cash flow projection, that very topic was covered in my budgeting and reporting course. I went to the professor and asked if I could do a projection for Gotham instead of the assigned project. Being in school was like having a tremendous team of consultants working with me.”


“The M.B.A. gave me a whole new view on how I did my job,” said Patterson, who took a job as director of production at Pittsburgh Opera as he was finishing his degree. “When I got to Pittsburgh, Mark Weinstein, the new general director, was putting into place new budgeting and marketing structures. Because we had both been to business school, I could relate to what he was saying. We talked about choosing rep in terms of global costs of production, marketing and development. We used to look at each production like a stock and try to put together a balanced portfolio for the season.”

O’Leary offered a caveat for those considering a degree in arts management: “I don’t think you should get an advanced degree right away. The coursework is so much more valuable if you have experience in a company first. It is always going to be true that your qualifications and reputation as a collaborator are more important than any degree, but it is also true that degrees are helpful — both in getting a good job and doing a good job. The huge difference with any arts degree is the financial implication. School is expensive, and a degree like theater management is not like one in law or medicine — you are not going to be able to pay it back as quickly. Just as it is a risk for an opera singer to spend a lot of money getting a degree, it is a risk for an arts administrator. You have to understand what you’re getting into.”

Lessons from the Masters

While advanced degrees have paid off for many, they are no means *de rigueur*. In October 2007, *ArtSearch* included listings for 107 available administrative positions; nine of those expressed a preference for applicants with advanced degrees, while only two required them. Members of the field have shown a growing appreciation for the benefits of formal study, but the possession of certain skills and attitudes seems to be ultimately more important than the specific manner in which they were acquired. Many of today’s senior professionals spoke of encountering their most important teachers outside the classroom.

“I had really good mentors along the way,” said Paul Horpedahl, The Santa Fe Opera’s production director. “Some of those were positive, and a couple were negative — I learned the right ways and the wrong ways of doing things in terms of leadership, management, communication. Probably the one that stands out the most was Craig Miller, who was the resident lighting designer at Santa Fe for a long time. He was here when I was an apprentice, and what he



A degree like theater management is not like one in law or medicine — you are not going to be able to pay it back so quickly. Just as it is a risk for an opera singer to spend a lot of money getting a degree, it is a risk for an arts administrator.

shared with everybody was his incredible love of what he was doing, along with an incredible professionalism. You do the work, enjoy it and treat your colleagues with respect and concern.”

“There are two people who are responsible for the standards that I have — Ben Baker and John Conklin,” said Abby Rodd, who is technical director of Glimmerglass Opera. “Ben was the technical director at Long Wharf Theatre, where I had my first carpentry job. The first 10 things I built there I had to rip apart and build all over again, or Ben would have somebody else rebuild them for me. It’s because of my time with Ben that I get along with John.” Rodd is now responsible for the construction and running of four new productions each season. “It could be tempting, especially by the fourth show, to cut corners, but nobody is going to do that with John around.”

Attention to detail is important, but so is an ability to see the big picture. “I had to learn that it’s not just about the scenery,” said Rodd. “John once chewed me out for not having a masking flat in for a rehearsal. For me, it was a low priority — I was focused on the details of the set pieces. But he explained that the singers, the dressers, everybody needed to know exactly what it would be like backstage. Adding a flat at the last minute could really mess things up. I can think of plenty of designers who are definitely more focused on their piece of the picture. The attention to the whole was an important lesson.”

Kevin Mynatt, who was named managing director at Central City Opera in spring 2007, recalled the strong hand that Jane Hill took with him when she was executive director of Opera Omaha. “I was pretty happy working in production, but Jane sat me down in a review and said, ‘Let’s lay out the next 15 years of your career.’ I didn’t understand. That’s the kind of thing you do in business school, but it’s not something M.F.A.

graduates like me think about. We all think we’ll get the M.F.A., move to New York and become rich and famous designers. The first place I ended up was a scene shop in Newark.” With Hill’s encouragement, Mynatt eventually moved on to Portland Opera, where he was responsible for a production budget twice as large as Opera Omaha’s entire operating budget at that time.

Hill, who later recommended Mynatt for his job at Central City Opera, says she had her eye on him from the beginning: “When OPERA America sent out a call for a government affairs representative from each company, he volunteered. I thought, ‘Hmm, interesting.’ I have always felt staff members are like your children — you don’t own them. They are your temporary gift, and it is your job to help them learn and grow and discover. If they’re as good as you think they are, you’re going to make them even better, and then they’re going to go somewhere else.”

“I had a lot of mentoring myself,” noted Hill, whose path to Opera Omaha was anything but conventional: She trained as an actress and gained her business acumen at Celanese Fibers Marketing Company, where a starving artist’s “day job” led to increasingly responsible positions. Still, she had much to learn when she took the reins at Opera Omaha: “I used to walk down the hall muttering, ‘A debit is... a credit is....’ When Marc Scorca asked me to be on the board of OPERA America, I said, ‘You’re crazy.’ But he wanted someone who didn’t just bring the conventional wisdom. I got a lot of mentoring from my fellow executives on the OPERA America board. They were so generous. I like to say I got my M.F.A. from OPERA America. But you have to have curiosity, a willingness to ask questions. If you go into a situation afraid someone will discover that you don’t know everything, you’re sunk.”

“I should never have been given the job of TD,” said Rodd, who moved up through the ranks of the company

— she had no previous experience as a technical director. “But John is really interested in giving people a chance to grow. At first, I was afraid to put in my two cents at meetings, but John always encouraged me. The first few times he actually agreed with me I was sort of shocked. He boosted by confidence immensely. John is a very intense guy, but it’s never a pissing contest. There is no ego. It’s about the work. It’s about having high standards. John gave me the best compliment I’ve ever had in my life — at some point, after we got in a fight, he told me that I made him want to be a better designer. He said sometimes he’ll see me doing a note on stage that he never would have told me to do, so that makes him feel like he needs to take it up a notch as well. I think it’s totally the opposite — I see how hard he works, so I can’t just sit back and watch. I will never work as hard as he does, but I can try to keep up.”

While some great mentors take an active advisory role, others have influenced generations of professionals simply by example. “My first job was assistant stage manager at Lyric Opera of Chicago,” said Patterson, noting that the late Ardis Krainik was general director at the time: “She had an office backstage and spent some part of each day there. That sent a strong signal — at the end of the day, you live and die by the productions you put on the stage. If you’re not there watching out for the product, you’ve lost the game, no matter how much money you raised that day. I never worked directly with her, but I spent a lot of time just watching her. I learned a lot about style — how she worked with artists, with her staff, with stagehands.”

“I really learned my business skills from John Crosby,” said Horpedahl, referring to the late founding general director of The Santa Fe Opera. “Not that I worked extremely closely with him, but I always had

tremendous respect for him because he knew so much not only about the art form but also about the business side of the company. He made it very clear that keeping all those things in line was important. He had very specific ways of doing things, and I was around enough to see his methods and then carry them with me to other jobs.”

In addition to the influence of individuals, many of today’s successful professionals talk about how they were influenced by the overall culture at certain workplaces. “Wherever you start work, whether with a law firm or an opera company, I believe your entire career will be defined and relate to the values you acquire in the early stages,” said Brian Dickie. Currently general director of Chicago Opera Theater, Dickie began his career at Glyndebourne Festival Opera. “So many of us were inspired by working alongside all those great people. When you’re in your early 20s, you need a benchmark to hang onto. I am struck again and again that people who start off in excellent companies tend to continue in the same way.”

There is clearly something about the culture at Pittsburgh Opera that helps people realize their potential; David Shefsiek, former development director, went on (after a stint at Vancouver Opera) to become executive director of Pacific Opera Victoria, and in 2005 Artistic Administrator Allan Naplan became general director of Madison Opera. Patterson, the most recent Pittsburgh staffer to lead his own company, spoke of his experience with Weinstein and Artistic Director Christopher Hahn: “No one was pigeonholed into a department — there was not a rigidly defined distribution of responsibilities. Mark worked to foster an environment where we looked at all issues together — development, marketing, production. And when any of us said to Mark and Christopher that we wanted to

People ask me all the time if they should get an MBA. I don't think it will ever hurt you to know how to read a balance sheet, to have a sense of strategy.



For me, a passion for opera is paramount. You have to have a work ethic and be organized, but you can always fine-tune certain skill sets.

do something new, they said, 'Go do it.' Allan and I were both out among the public more than usual for our positions. Allan had his radio show. I gave talks to guilds and Mark would have me sitting with donors during technical rehearsals."

"In Omaha, Jane and Hal [France] really created a culture where we were all working toward the same objectives," said Mynatt. "There were no silos — we all chipped in and did whatever needed to be done. It's easy to think, 'No one understands how hard we work in production,' but no one really understands how hard the box office works, either. Everyone has demands. It is all about management of people at the end of the day."

Identifying Opportunities to Learn

Another common theme was the ability to create one's own learning opportunities and make connections among experiences that might not immediately seem related. O'Leary's first job at New York City Opera was writing grants. "It was the perfect education about how an opera company works, because you're constantly going around saying, 'Imagine we had this grant. What would you do with it? How much would that cost?' There was an investigative reporting aspect. It was a fantastic way of learning."

After three years in development, O'Leary left to pursue a stage directing career, finding tremendous opportunities there, as well: "When you're an assistant director, people are constantly asking you for critical information, so you have to learn all of that information — fast. I spent a lot of time saying, 'I will find out immediately and get back to you.' When I eventually came back to City Opera — now in the trenches of a rehearsal room instead of a cubicle in development — I often thought that if I had really known what goes

on, I could have never written all those lyrical grant proposals about opera as this harmonious idyll of collaborative process. In fact, when you see what people actually go through — and what they do for each other — to put on a show, it is all the more inspiring, but you couldn't write that stuff in a grant proposal because nobody would believe you."

Greg Carpenter, who was promoted from director of development to executive director of Opera Colorado earlier this year, spent a great deal of time in academic institutions — as a singer. However, throughout his studies he was involved in administrative work. "At the time, it was about putting food in my mouth. It wasn't until 1997 that I decided to think about something besides performing. I had done so much administrative work at the college level that I fell into a position at the University of Maryland, where they were building a new facility." Had Carpenter been enrolled in an arts management program, the job could have served as a thesis: "My title was 'artist and event services manager,' but at that point we didn't even have a facility. I spent my time looking at a lot of different management models for large-scale performing arts facilities on college campuses. I was trying to come up with a model based on best practices."

"I have learned a huge amount from every professional I have worked with at every company," said O'Leary. "In my opinion, working at an opera company is all about understanding the problems of all the people you collaborate with. To work together successfully you have to have tremendous respect for why development needs certain things, but you also have to understand why it can be problematic for artistic to deliver them. You need to know why decisions made at administrative meetings can cause problems for production. Your greatest opportunities to learn are

those moments when you are working on a project that is difficult to put together.”

“A big part of it is being open to opportunities,” said Carpenter. “I had always done administrative work as a necessity, but when I decided I didn’t need to perform, I looked at all of the opportunities presenting themselves. I didn’t set my sights on anything in particular. I looked at what was in front of me and took the best one. I know so many people who set a goal early on. They think they know the end result they want, but they don’t understand the steps to get there. They become so focused that they are blind to opportunities that present themselves.”

The Stuff that Can’t Be Taught

Knowledge can be increased and new skills can be acquired, but when asked what they look for when hiring, opera leaders often cite more elemental character traits. “For me, a passion for opera is paramount,” said Danis. “You have to have a work ethic and be organized, but you can always fine-tune certain skill sets. Formal training is more important in certain areas, like accounting, but in areas like marketing and development, I have come to see the enthusiasm as really essential. I am not a fan of generic marketing or development experts who don’t connect to the product or the company. Donors can tell.”

“I used to look really hard at resumes. I don’t care about any of that anymore,” said Hill, who is most interested in working with people who will get the job done. “I stand at the copy machine, and if you are too important to do that, you don’t belong here. With that goes some discipline. I don’t care if you have a

migraine — you and your migraine better be at your desk. You need curiosity. If you don’t want to learn something new, it’s not going to work. I try not to pretend I have knowledge I don’t have, and I try to be open to learn in any situation. It has made my work interesting, and people do help you. In the early years when Opera Omaha was going down the tubes, I spent half my time talking to vendors who were owed money. They were just glad to finally have their calls returned. People don’t want you to fail. Almost all of those vendors became my allies.”

“You can only find out so much from a resume,” said Horpedahl. “The thing I look for is an enthusiasm for their craft and a willingness and ability to get along with people in stressful situations. This is not a stress-free environment. It is a boiler room for days on end. It is not good enough to be a good props craftsman if you can’t deal with the strain and get along with your colleagues. Where people have gone to school is less important to me.”

“I think the main predictor of success is interest in the art, and willingness to work,” said O’Leary, who told this story: “By about 6:00 on my first day as an intern at Lincoln Center Festival, I was about to fall over from exhaustion, but I noticed that everyone around me was just getting started. I thought, ‘These people are crazy!’ But those people put on an excellent festival and by the end of the summer, I had gotten into the same rhythm. If you have genuine, burning interest, if you are intelligent and willing to work with other people, and if you are willing to work very hard, it is a fantastic field full of opportunities.”

It is always going to be true that your qualifications and reputation as a collaborator are more important than any degree, but it is also true that degrees are helpful — both in getting a good job and doing a good job.

The long-dominant model of what defines a performing artist's career is undergoing a rapid paradigm shift. Teaching artists are poised to replace the divas of stereotype with a new approach to the art of performance — both on and off stage.

A New Stage for Artists

By Thomas May

Just as 21st-century arts organizations are embracing identities as more than caretakers of past masterpieces, there is a growing acknowledgment that artists' contributions can no longer be limited to performances on the main stage. With the help of training programs designed to teach them to engage prospective audiences in new ways, many performers are expanding their arsenal of creative skills. Teaching artists are proving to be a valuable asset not only to fostering a new generation of audiences but to integrating artistic disciplines into the overall education of a young person.

The new paradigm stands in stark contrast to early outreach attempts that followed the straightforward principle of arts appreciation through exposure: busing kids in for an opera matinee or having artists make brief visits to the classroom to give a quick overview of the show. "The research shows that these drive-by programs were having no lasting impact," Eric

Booth points out. Booth — himself a teaching artist who has pursued multiple endeavors as an actor, entrepreneur, author and public speaker — is considered a leading expert in the field of arts education. He founded *The Teaching Artist Journal* and designed the Art and Education program at The Juilliard School, where he is on the faculty as artistic advisor.

"So the new model has been to 'go deeper' in engaging students, and here we have been seeing a resonant artistic impact." Booth explains that going deeper has taken several forms, from the interactive *Music!Words!Opera!* approach, in which children create and produce their own opera, to longer-term residencies in schools for teaching artists. Increasingly, learning in an artistic discipline is aligned with other topics in the curriculum, so they become mutually reinforcing (a history session on the French Revolution, for example, leads to an opera workshop focused on the same period).

"The consistency across all these approaches," according to Booth, "is the role of teaching artists. They are the key service deliverers. And as a field, they are woefully underprepared to be effective. It's only in the last handful of years that conservatories and arts institutions have started to get serious about the professionalization of the teaching artist. Slowly, the field is coming to recognize it's a responsibility to prepare these artists to be effective — and it takes a good deal of training." Moreover, Booth points out that "at least 90% of graduates from Juilliard are going to be teaching at some point. And the small subset who actually feel artistically enriched by their teaching are assaulting the norms and causing the music world to take notice."

Yet teaching artists have to contend not just with belated institutional recognition of their importance but with a stigma that views their pedagogical efforts as "glorified temp work."



Complete photo credits for this article can be found on page 35.



The clichéd but persistent notion that their time should be focused “purely” on their own artistic discipline only reinforces such a stigma. Even so, clearly there is a strong artistic personality that finds a path toward working as a teaching artist as instinctively as salmon swimming upriver. “When I graduated from the Fletcher Opera Institute in North Carolina, I found out on my own that I was naturally winding together these two aspects which I had been pursuing for a long time, as a teacher and a singer. The two ended up supporting each other,” recalls Alice Dawson, who has been working in numerous teaching artist programs, including those with the Metropolitan Opera Guild and New York City Opera.



The teaching artist’s profile is not necessarily “charismatic” in the popular sense. Such breezy adjectives mask the hard work and deep engagement that are essential to a successful career as a teaching artist. Those who continue to lament the putative absence of an authoritative master-teaching artist figure along the lines of Leonard Bernstein should take note of what Booth refers to as “the Leonard Bernstein trap.” Charisma, for Booth, is actually incidental: “It’s great if you’ve got it, just as it’s wonderful to have superhuman vocal skills. But you can also do some great artwork if you don’t happen to have that magical gift.” And a vague, one-size-fits-all charisma is precisely what some of the old-fashioned “drive-by” programs have staked their hopes on all too often.

Not only do teaching artists need to be able to channel their energies into strikingly varied environments, but the work requires a serious commitment of time and resources. Nevena Arizanovic, who manages the Metropolitan Opera Guild’s Urban Voices and Mannes Partnership programs, points out an essential feature of teaching artist programs: namely, they cannot be developed as ready-to-go packages but need to be carefully tailored to a given school’s specific curricula and

student needs. “Our residencies are based on close partnerships between the teaching artists and academic teachers. We need to develop approaches that are directly connected to what they are already doing in their classroom.” Dawson remarks that the Guild residencies in which she has been involved as a teaching artist require visits varying from 30 to 90 minutes a week, with each program ranging from 10 weeks to the entire year. “Before each residency starts, there is a planning session with all of the involved teachers usually lasting for about two hours. We ask teachers who have never participated in the programs before to come to the Guild for a day of professional development. Also, the teaching artist and teachers meet once a week for about 30-45 minutes to discuss how things went during the day’s classes and to make plans for the following week.”

“There is this idea that you teach when you don’t have singing jobs,” says Jennifer Rivera, who sang Nerone in New York City Opera’s *Agrippina* last fall. When she was a student at Juilliard, Rivera was involved in a residency teaching kids in the public school system. “I never felt that way, since the most important thing is the future of our art form.” She remembers the thrill of seeing youngsters turn on to the beauties of an art to which they originally had absolutely no connection. “These kids were covering their ears when I first sang, but by end of the semester I played them a video (Ravel’s *L’Enfant et les sortilèges*) and

they wanted to see it again and again, with completely rapt attention. I'm always volunteering myself to work with kids." But Rivera sees a dearth of programs that allow fully established singers sufficient leeway to work in a sustained way as teaching artists.

In many ways the opera world is behind the curve in developing the model of the teaching artist. Some of this is simply the result of basic logistics; opera singers rarely spend more than six to eight weeks with a company, and most of that time is heavily scheduled with fittings, rehearsals and performances. Theater companies, many of which work with a local ensemble of actors, have been developing this kind of expertise for some time. Likewise, the musicians of symphony orchestras work and live in a community year-round, thus being in a natural position to lead the vanguard of creative, deep engagement with arts education. The San Francisco Symphony, for example, is already celebrating the 20th anniversary this year of its bold, comprehensive Adventures in Music program. Designed for grades 1 through 5, the program is an archetype of the arts integration approach with the rest of the curriculum; it embraces the entire public school system of San Francisco and reaches almost 25,000 children. Oliver Theil, San Francisco Symphony's director of education, emphasizes the recognition of cultural diversity underlying the program: "We

bring in ensembles that play a range from classical quartets to calypso, Chinese music and Afro-Latin rhythms. But we also explore the commonalities among all these different musical languages."



A much younger program that is also proving to be highly effective is the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra's community partnership program, in which some 90% of the ensemble participates. Richard Ashburner, who serves as education consultant for the program, explains that both patience and flexibility are essential to build the kind of structure for teaching artists who can work successfully with a "broad band of student need, drawing on the right strategies to deal with multiple intelligences." Deborah Bloom is a violinist with the orchestra who has worked over a long period with earlier in-school models. She observes that "we now have better tools for getting and keeping the attention of students and are able to go into classrooms that are far apart in terms of socioeconomic levels. We strive to be relevant and to reinforce the curriculum already in place."

Other initiatives that opera companies might want to look to for inspiration are programs such as Inside Out Community Arts (www.insideoutca.org), which serves at-risk youth in middle schools in the Los Angeles area (indeed, teaching artists from Los Angeles Opera have collaborated with Inside Out). Jonathan Zeichner, who co-founded Inside Out in 1996 and is executive director, explains that the organization trains working artists from across the spectrum — film, music, photography, etc. — to work with kids in creating performances in their own communities. "We use the arts to build living skills and community, and to help with socialization and conflict resolution," Zeichner says. "If I were in the opera world and wanted to bring opera into the contemporary youth culture," Zeichner suggests, "there are a million things I would do, such as a combination of hip-hop and opera. I know that's been tried, but what I've seen isn't necessarily presented in a time and place where they are accessible to inner-city youth."



Curiously, the Internet has yet to be exploited as an effective tool in the arsenal of the teaching artist, although video conferencing is one tack the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra's education staff has begun to explore. Booth believes the main problem here is that the Internet is primarily a channel for information, whereas a principal goal of the teaching artist, in one of his characteristic mantras, is "engagement before information." Still, there is undoubtedly untapped potential here that could open up new avenues of artistic discovery.

A widening spectrum of opera companies, large and small, is paying heed to the promise of teaching artists and developing programs to maximize their effectiveness. New York City Opera's former director of education, Talena Mara, is an especially passionate advocate who brings a unique perspective as a teaching artist who also spent years as a principal and



teacher in schools. “The old European idea of the conservatory as a place meant just to produce performers has run its course.” Mara notes that the mission of New York City Opera “has always been to nurture American singers, young talent and to serve the general public.” In terms of the programs she has been developing for teaching artists, “I really want them to be opera singers, to know and love the art form and — the tricky part — to have classroom experience.”

As with a number of other companies invested in arts education, New York City Opera’s teaching artists involve students in creating their own operas. Seattle Opera’s education artistic administrator, Jonathan Dean, has been generating interest over the last few years with *The Theft of the Gold*, his clever adaptation of *Das Rheingold* for elementary school students. “Basically, with a team of four teaching artists we take over a participating school for a week.” The teaching artists in this program come from the world of theater rather than opera, while singers from the company’s young artists program also participate in the performances. “In our model, children have the experience of making opera and then checking it out,” Dean notes. “Busing them in and sitting them down when they have no background and too much music from iPods simply doesn’t work. It’s unfortunate that we’ve moved from a culture where everyone performs to a culture where we sit and listen to performances. You really have to be a doer of art to become an appreciator of art.”

The Metropolitan Opera Guild oversees a wide variety of programs involving teaching artists. Its In-Class Arts Partnerships, for example, bring teaching artists together with classroom teachers to encourage student creativity. Alice Dawson has found her work as a teaching artist in this program to be eye-opening: “We’re using opera as an entry point, and the Guild has a strong understanding that we’re trying to use this art form as a way to connect with students and with their personal creativity, not what we think their creativity should be. And I found for myself the most important thing really meant being able to question what my artistry should be about instead of following someone else’s prescribed program.” Another Met Opera Guild program, Urban Voices, links students to a Guild-trained choral teaching artist. Courtney Carey has been working with sixth-graders this year in a school that essentially has no regular music teacher. “It’s exciting to watch these kids learn they can sing more than hip-hop and what they hear on the radio.”

There’s no question that opera companies are responding to the growing awareness of teaching artists as a bridge between opera as we know it and the new generation. Since taking the helm at San Francisco Opera, General Director David Gockley has been laying the groundwork for a new education program. The affiliated San Francisco Opera Guild has recently introduced a pilot program, Creative Opera Workshop, which involves a four-week residency for teaching artists in high schools. The

Guild's education director, Caroline Altman, describes a typical session, in which the topic is *Macbeth*: "Today we were dealing with Shakespeare's text. We performed scenes and talked about how music would be added and how Verdi as a romantic and lyrical composer addresses a text that is not necessarily so romantic or lyrical. The skills you need are an ability to think on your feet and be humorous and yet disciplined — to be able to encourage the kids and spread enthusiasm and excitement about the art form."

Pensacola Opera's Tim Kennedy serves as director of education and community outreach and is also the company's only resident teaching artist. He has been managing an in-school program that is young but infused with Kennedy's own passion for teaching. "The actual term 'teaching artist' is not even one I had in my vocabulary two years ago, even though that's what I had been doing for a while." After the first launch of a collaborative project, "We've been able to prove that as a state heavily based in standardized testing that scores are going up and that arts education is in fact adding to the academics."

Kennedy's point about the mutual benefits between arts education and standard curricula addresses one of the most

sensitive issues around teaching artists: the rapport that happens — or doesn't — in the classroom with regular teachers. Mara cautions that a major hurdle for the teaching artist model is an overall attitude of condescension toward classroom culture. "We have to let go of this image that we are going in and enlightening this group. This condescending image still hangs on to that belief that we are giving them something they will never have without us. That betrays an arrogance that is not good for our field. The truth is that many teachers who have opera singers in their classroom already have a deep interest in the work being done."

How does Mara suggest overcoming this negative feedback loop that works against the goals of everyone involved? "A large percentage of people we are sending into classrooms are guest artists" (Mara's term for the "drive-by" concept of instant exposure without nurturing roots). "The real teaching artist has to find a way to communicate in the grey area between the language of their own art and the language teachers use, the language of the classroom. The teaching artist isn't just a performer who engages the kids with a big persona but goes in and sincerely understands how to engage all learning styles."



At The Santa Fe Opera, teaching artists work in a student-produced opera program targeted to each school's particular needs. According to Education Associate Jill Heath, vetting of the teaching artists is done several ways: "Regionally we can handpick people according to what we see them do in their communities, and also through university and singing programs."

Pacific Northwest Ballet, according to Outreach Coordinator Stephanie Scopelitis, has been paying lots of attention to finessing their training of teaching artists, who include former company members and dancers from the community with ballet or modern-dance training: "One thing we have done that works wonderfully is to partner teaching artists with a classroom teacher before they begin their residencies. They simply go in and observe classes, the language, behavioral management skills." She points out that, as with opera companies, the emphasis is on an interdisciplinary art form, "with all the elements that go into a dance production, beyond choreography, to music and sets. The point is not so much teaching the steps of ballet but teaching students to become thinkers through the arts."

And the payoff for teaching artists themselves can be extraordinary. "Frankly, master teaching is the most rewarding performance you'll ever give," Mara asserts. Courtney Carey

says that this kind of arts teaching "reinforces your technique, since you're applying what you need to do in the classroom. So much of what you do is demonstration — how that sound is to be shaped — that it enhances your musicality." As Eric Booth and a number of newly emerging teaching artists describe it, the role is really an extended metaphor for what any artist does. The goal is not information as added baggage but an enhanced experience in the matrix of connections teaching artists help to forge: between their art and new audiences, between different aspects of school curricula, between themselves and academic teachers. "The calling of most artists is to be creative in an ensemble atmosphere," Caroline Altman says. "And those are the two main components involved in being in a classroom."

In fact, Booth argues, teaching artists are showing the way to how artists in the unfolding century will be living. "These skills don't just mean you can go in and wow a group of fourth graders. You can talk to a group of donors, go into a chamber of commerce or a Rotary Club and engage them. Teaching artists are able to bridge the gap between being inside the art form and making authentic connections with a variety of different groups. And this is exactly what the arts need in the 21st century." 🍷

Thomas May writes and lectures about music and theater. He is the author of Decoding Wagner and The John Adams Reader.

Photo credits:

pg. 30: Eric Booth speaks at *Opera Conference 2007* in Miami. Photo courtesy of OPERA America. pg. 31: Manhattan School of Music students present *The Three Little Pigs* (MSM's opera outreach program, set to music by Mozart and a libretto by John Davies) to children attending the program. Photo by R. Andrew Lepley. • Stage Director Rhoda Levine working with students at the rehearsal of Lennox Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement* that was given in December 2005. Photo by R. Andrew Lepley. • Shiree Kidron as Zemire and Matthew Pena as Azor in the Manhattan School of Music's production of Ludwig Spohr's *Beauty and the Beast*. Photo by Carol Rosegg. pg. 32: Kyle Slattery at the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra's community partnership program at Long Elementary School in the Lindbergh School District. Photo by Erica Burrus. • Principal trombone Tim Myers give a demonstration about the brass family with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra's community partnership program at Long Elementary School in the Lindbergh School District. Photo by Erica Burrus. pg. 33: Students perform during *How I Spent My Summer Vacation* at Holley-Navarre Primary School. Photo courtesy of Pensacola News Journal. • Students prepare to perform *The Three Little Pigs*. Photo courtesy of Pensacola Opera. • The City Mouse (Alissa Anderson) and the Country Mouse perform *Home at Last!*. Photo courtesy of Pensacola Opera. • Q&A at Waller Elementary. Photo courtesy of Pensacola Opera. pg. 34: The San Francisco Symphony's *Adventures in Music* Program. Photo by Kristen Loken.

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People Make Opera



The Banff Centre. Photo by Scott Rowed.

Banff, Alberta, located in heart of the Canadian Rockies, is an inspiring place. Set amid the natural splendors of the area is The Banff Centre, a globally respected arts, cultural and educational institution.

It was there, in August, that leaders in Canada's opera community came together for People Make Opera, a three-day colloquium organized by Opera.ca and The Banff Centre. Issues of governance were front and center at this event, which focused on artistic direction, staff management and board responsibilities. Following presentations from experts in these fields, participants took part in smaller breakout meetings, where they exchanged their respective companies' views on these matters. The atmosphere was upbeat and collegial, with artistic directors, board members and senior administrators freely exchanging ideas, shared concerns and challenges.

Also present at the event was Bill Richardson, the new host of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's *Saturday Afternoon at the Opera* radio program. Here is his insightful description of People Make Opera.

By Bill Richardson

"In which operas do mountains figure?"

That's a likely sounding question for an opera quiz. *William Tell* comes to mind right away. Wagner's operas, mountains in themselves, are a regular "craglist" of possibilities. *La Sonnambula* has an Alpine setting; so does *La Wally*, and isn't it in the third act of *Carmen* that Don Jose joins the smugglers and gypsies in some kind of high-altitude grotto where cards get read and bad things are accurately foretold?

Mountains find a place elsewhere in music, of course. There's Richard Strauss's *Alpine Symphony*, and Hovhaness's *Symphony No. 2, "Mysterious Mountain"* and Lord knows what would come to light if the great god Google were consulted. Even without its intervention, there's ample evidence, both in music and in literature, of the power of mountains to console and to alarm — to inspire.

Inspiration was key for the members of Opera.ca when they gathered in Banff in August; inspiration and information, in equal measure. Ringed by the Canadian Rockies, the 50 or so administrators, board members and volunteers from across the country, had they wanted to settle on a motto, might have remembered Hillary's "Because it's there." But it's the sage Dr. Seuss who offers what might have been the most salient motto: "Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting... So, get on your way." It was practicality, more than fancy, that dominated the agenda.

People Make Opera was the theme of the three-day colloquium, held August 10 to 12 at The Banff Centre. Playwright and librettist John Murrell set the tone for the working weekend in his welcoming remarks by noting how Pauline Kael was fond of comparing opera and film: Both are hugely complex operations that bring together workers from many different disciplines. It shouldn't work and sometimes it doesn't, but when it does, when all those diverse minds are brought to bear, something like a miracle occurs. The question, then, is how best to sharpen and focus this deeply human enterprise so that the miraculous takes place more often than not; how best to ensure that the deeply human but fragile mechanism on which opera relies — the human voice, singing — is sustained by a well-oiled administrative machine?

Friday evening's student performance of the recent opera *Frobisher* by composer John Estacio and Murrell was an eloquent way of setting the stage for the weekend's work, an apt reminder that the art is what it's all about. Three keynote speakers brought their experience and expertise to bear. After each of their informal presentations, the participants broke up into three smaller focus groups to discuss what they'd just heard, to share information about their own organizations' practices and to raise questions. Session moderators summarized the major points raised around their respective tables for the larger group when it reassembled.

The Dance of Board and Staff

Aaron Milrad, of the Toronto law firm Fraser, Milner, Casgrain, spoke to the complicated issues of organizational governance: the necessary, delicate and sometimes fraught dance of board and administration. Milrad stressed that nonprofits need to pay attention to the recent, well-publicized lapses in governance that have rocked the private sector. The public, properly, is more alert now than ever to the possibility of the misuse or misappropriation of funds, and accountability to donors, members and stakeholders has taken on a new prominence. His wide-ranging presentation touched on such points as diversity, conflict of interest and sidestepping difficulties of governance through a mutual clarity of expectations.

Milrad's remarks jumpstarted a lively discussion in the smaller groups. It was clear that practices vary widely around such issues as attracting new board members, length of term, monitoring board performance and succession planning. Discussion points included the following:

- Establishing financial requirements of board members; different ways of applying what Milrad described as the "give, get or get off" rule
- Mentoring practices; forming alliances between seasoned board members and young professionals; potential candidates for future service



Scene from the 2007 Banff Summer Arts Festival performance of Estacio's *Frobisher*. Photo by Don Lee.

- Implementing systems of self-evaluation for board members on an annual basis
- Staggering terms to avoid the mass exodus phenomenon
- Vigilance about maintaining a good mix of backgrounds and professional skills among board members
- Empowering board members to drive the organization forward
- Striving for an ethnic mix of the board that reflects the demographic of the community

The Interplay of Dreams and Reality

If Milrad's presentation was mostly about practicalities, Peter Hinton, artistic director of English Theatre at Ottawa's National Arts Centre, spoke mostly about ideals. He spoke about dreams and realities, and about the intersection of opera and theater. Articulate and plainspoken, he wondered why the two communities are so often divided. In the U.K., he pointed out, it's common for directors to move from serious theater to family theater to opera. The skills and ideas acquired in one can be brought to bear on the other. He suggested that North Americans saw less fluidity. Hinton also spoke candidly about the surfeit of artists, the paucity of work and the difficulties of developing an involved audience. He raised the highly hypothetical but important question: What would happen if it all just went away? Would anyone notice? Would there be a sufficient outcry that something would be done, or would it just be allowed to wither?

The essence of Hinton's remarks can be found in a Jeannette Winterston essay from which he quoted. She tells of hearing Britten's *Death in Venice*. On first exposure, she had a hard time with the music. Then she heard it again, and again in different circumstances. Over time, and with work, it lodged with her. She got it. But it wasn't immediate. Art is effortful, she says, which raises the question of whether or not, in a fast food world, we're ready to sacrifice instant gratification for the sometimes hard work of understanding what's new. Hinton made the point that art is long term, and that artists require a home, a place to be nurtured, to experiment, to grow in confidence. Why do we need opera? We need it in the same way we need dreams: to make reality bearable.

Hinton's passionate and provocative speech struck a resonant chord; in the smaller groups, many more questions were raised than answers were given. This seemed only right, since it was a speech that encouraged blue-sky speculating and artistic stock-taking. Among the points that emerged from the discussion:

- Pride of ownership can become a value. When the community is encouraged to feel it has a stake in the company, and that the development of new work is vital to the company's health, audiences are better prepared to embrace the new and can be made to feel proud of risks.
- Co-productions and developing work for export abroad were both seen as viable ways of taking an artistic chance and mitigating financial risk.
- Where does musical theater end and opera begin? What kind of value system makes that determination?
- What can be done about the apparent absence of a core repertoire of Canadian opera? There's no shortage of work, and well-received work. What has to happen for it to find a more lasting place with our companies?

Working Together to Achieve Results

Whether by accident or design, the three keynote speeches had a great deal to say to one another, and fit together very nicely as a piece. Colleen Blake, executive director of Ontario's Shaw Festival, combined both the practical and the anecdotal in her description of how human resource planning has created a place where the operative word is Yes; where ideas of collaboration, creativity and inclusiveness have been very specifically and deliberately implemented to create a working environment leagues removed from the helter-skelter atmosphere associated with some arts organizations. Competence, respect and fairness are the values that mark their human resources policies, used in tandem with principles of accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, consistency, adaptability, simplicity and openness. Blake made the point that these are just buzz words unless they are actively employed, both administratively and artistically.

Again, the discussion in the smaller groups revealed a wide variety of practices around human resources questions. Often, they reflected the size of the company: Predictably, the larger the agency, the more standardized and formalized the protocols. Among the issues raised:

- Is Opera.ca an appropriate agency for addressing such questions as salary inequity between companies?
- Running an organization on a family model is fine to a certain extent, but documentation is important.
- Human resource questions aren't a discrete aspect of a management style: The way one manages personnel reflects the way one handles the long-term goals and aspirations of the company.
- How are boards involved in these questions? Are they involved in the development or implementation of HR questions? Should there be a HR specialist on the board?
- Should there be mandated and standardized personnel reviews?
- Should guest performers be evaluated in such a way as well?
- If these jobs are learned in the trenches, what kind of attention should be paid to mentoring and succession planning?
- Should professional development be made part of a compensation package?

Of course, all these speeches and all these ideas were further discussed in private, undocumented sessions. Maybe that's where the most valuable work was done. What impressed me most about the weekend was the level of real commitment of the participants, and what I read as an absence of cynicism.

This is not nine-to-five work. It's a vocation, the work of love. "Your mountain is waiting," wrote Dr. Seuss in *Oh, The Places You'll Go*. And Opera.ca provides the coda: Climbing it is going to be a challenge and a joy. ☺



Casey Prescott, Colleen Blake, Aaron Milrad and John Murrell at the Banff colloquium. Photo courtesy of Opera.ca.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2006 ANNUAL FIELD REPORT

BY PATRICIA EGAN AND NANCY SASSER

If you've looked at the financial statements and box office reports of your opera company over the last few years, you've probably seen a mix of good news and bad news, as the results of OPERA America's annual Professional Opera Survey (POS) confirm.

First, the good news. You've had a surge in contributed revenue in recent years, with individual giving leading the way. If you are one of the growing number of companies with endowment funds, your investment income rebounded as the capital markets recovered from the 2001 low point.

But if your company is in the United States, you may also have noticed declines in attendance for your main season productions. You're not alone — more than half of the U.S. companies that completed the POS each year since 2002 reported a downturn in audience, despite investing more in marketing efforts. You may have been one of the companies that responded by reducing the number of productions and performances, and by raising ticket prices, which kept total box office revenue from declining, though growth was sluggish over the five years.

While the strong contributed revenue and investment income growth helped many U.S. companies balance their budgets in 2006, just over half posted deficits.

But if your home is north of the border (with Canada, that is), you probably recorded consistent increases in box office revenue, unlike your U.S. counterparts. You produced more

operas with more performances and enjoyed higher attendance in 2006 than 2002, though levels were below their peaks the two prior years. And you are likely to have shown a surplus for the last four years, unlike the U.S., where companies reported average net income only in 2005.

In both the U.S. and Canada, the balance sheet components of total net assets, working capital and investments all strengthened over the four-year period.

These are a few of the highlights in the financial and performance activity from the Annual Field Report (AFR), which analyzes the 2006 POS data in detail. In this article, we'll summarize the major findings for the U.S. and Canadian Constant Sample Groups (CSG), which include the companies that submitted the POS each year since 2002.

As you read through the findings, keep in mind two external factors that are reflected in the numbers. The first is the recovery in the economic markets since 2001, which not only boosted investment gains for those with endowments, but also made it possible for donors to increase their giving, benefitting companies of all sizes. The second is the change in audience participation that opera companies share with many of their performing arts counterparts. Buying habits for both subscriptions and single tickets have changed, and companies are struggling to attract and retain new audiences. This translates to more dollars spent on marketing efforts, and finer tweaking of pricing structures to keep the ticket revenues up.

United States

We begin with the U.S. CSG, which included 56 companies with budgets from \$183,000 to \$60.1 million. The Metropolitan Opera, with a 2006 budget of \$222 million, is not included in the U.S. CSG as its numbers would overwhelm the survey data. Even excluding the Met, the larger companies have a marked effect on the data. While the average company had expenses of \$8.6 million, the median company's expenses were only \$3.6 million; i.e., half the companies had budgets less than \$3.6 million and the other half were greater than that amount. The large variance between the average and the median means that the larger companies at times skew the numbers.

In 2006, companies produced an average of 21 performances of 3.8 operas and had attendance of 39,000 for their main season offerings. This is a reduction in activity and attendance, both since 2005 and since 2002, when 41,600 people attended 23.3 performances of 4 operas. The positive news is that companies performed to 86% paid capacity, up from 73% in 2002, and subscription renewals of 81% were at their highest level of the five years.

Ticket prices have increased steadily since 2002. Prices went up the most for the best seats and nights where there may be less price resistance, while increases in the lowest prices were minimal, as companies sought to maintain an affordable ticket option. The higher ticket prices counteracted the effect of declining audiences in the box office results, though total ticket revenue rose only 5% since 2002,

well below the four-year inflation rate of 12.1% in the U.S. Marketing productivity is down, as companies spent a greater portion of their budgets to bring in audiences; each marketing dollar generated \$3.26 in ticket sales, compared to \$3.56 four years ago.

In contrast to sluggish box office growth, average investment income shot up 990% since 2002, from \$45,000 to \$489,000. As noted earlier, this five-year period tracks from the low point in the recent financial markets through their recovery, and boosted companies' average investments by 40% to \$9.8 million. Investment income provided just under 6% of total revenue.

Total earned revenue from box office, investments and other earned sources increased 1% in 2006, while total contributions declined by 1%; the net effect being flat revenue for the year. A look back to 2002 reveals that both earned and contributed revenue outpaced inflation for the four-year period, however.

The U.S. CSG was particularly successful in soliciting individual support, with a 25% increase in giving since 2002. Coupled with 22% increases in foundation and other private support, private contributions eclipsed box office as the primary source of revenue for the fourth year in a row. Only corporate giving declined during this period.

Public support showed fluctuations year-to-year in city and state funding while federal funding was relatively stable. Only county funding increased significantly over the four-year period, and surpassed state funding as the largest government source. While these were general trends, city, county and state funding varies significantly by location, more so than by budget size.

Opera companies were more productive with their fundraising activities, raising more dollars per dollar spent in 2006 than in 2005 when productivity slipped after increasing steadily.

Another productivity measure that is examined in the AFR is program coverage, which tracks the portion of artistic and production costs covered by box office revenue. Program coverage was 57% in 2006, but has fallen since 2002, when it was just under 60%. This is another reflection of the increasing importance of contributions in supporting the work on stage, as ticket sales have lagged.

On the spending side, expenses were relatively flat from 2002 through 2004, then jumped 8% in 2005, and were held to a modest 1% increase in 2006, for an overall expansion that matched the 12% inflation of the four-year period.

Artistic and production spending posted the smallest increases of any expense area over the four-year period, and was the only area that did not keep pace with inflation since 2002. But with the reduction in performance activity, per production expenditures increased 15% from 2002 to 2006 while per performance spending jumped 21%.

Opera companies spent 62.4% of their budgets on artistic and production expenses in 2006, compared to 64% in 2002. The revenue-generating activities of marketing and development garnered a greater portion of the operating budget over this period, as did education activities. Though education is only 2% of the budget, the increase reflects companies' investment in future audiences.

While spending among the departments has shifted over the years, total personnel expenditures have fluctuated little, with 63-64% of the budget consistently going towards artists and staff; personnel costs continue to be the largest portion of an opera company's budget.

Overall, companies in the U.S. CSG had mixed success in balancing their operations. After netting a small surplus in 2005, companies averaged a small loss in 2006 — total revenue was flat, while expenses increased slightly. The

2006 operating loss was the fourth loss in five years.

We turn now from annual operating figures to the capital components, which track a company's accumulated financial history and its distribution of assets on the balance sheet.

On average, companies in the U.S. CSG are better capitalized in 2006 than in the previous four years. Total net assets — what an organization owns after paying off all that it owes, working capital and investments all grew at rates that significantly outpaced both inflation and expense growth, with the most dramatic strengthening seen in the larger organizations.

Working capital is a measure of a company's ability to pay its bills on time, have the flexibility to pay for opportunities as they arise, and the ability to take more risks, knowing there is a cushion to fall back on. Half the companies added to their working capital since 2002, and the number of companies with positive working capital increased from 22 to 26.

Investments and endowment can provide a significant revenue stream that increases the strength and sustainability of an organization. More companies of varied sizes had endowments and investments in 2006 than in 2002, and are benefiting from the related income generated.

Canada

Let's take a look now at the Canadian Constant Sample Group (CA CSG), which included 11 companies ranging in budget size from \$409,000 to \$23.2 million. Average expenses were \$4.4 million, while the median was half that at \$2.2 million.

Unlike their U.S. counterparts, Canadian companies consistently increased the number of productions and performances from 2002 through 2005, though 2006 brought a dip, perhaps in response to a drop in attendance in 2005. Attendance

bounced back up in 2006, and showed 11% growth since 2002. In 2006, companies produced an average of 12.1 performances of 2.5 operas and had attendance of 24,000 for their main season offerings.

Canadian companies posted strong revenue and expense growth at triple the Canadian inflation rate of 9.1% since 2002, with 2006 marking their fourth consecutive year of surpluses.

A 14% jump in box office revenue in 2006 reflects both increases in attendance and in ticket prices. As in the U.S., the highest subscription and single ticket prices rose beyond the inflation rate, while the lowest prices were flat or saw only modest increases. The strong growth in box office revenue resulted in an increase in the program coverage ratio since 2002, from 56% to 57%. This is the same as in the U.S., though the U.S. ratio has been declining, rather than rising.

The recovery of the capital markets since 2002 is reflected in the 212% leap in investment income; however, only two companies hold 98% of the investments.

Overall, total earned revenue (from the box office, investments, and other earned activities) grew 14% in 2006 and 35% since 2002.

Contributed revenue increased at approximately the same rate as earned revenue. Public support continues to be the largest source of contributed revenue for Canadian companies; however, government funding declined as a percentage of expenses, as Canadian companies raised significant new dollars from private sources. Private support now exceeds the box office as the primary source of revenue.

Canadian companies spent a greater percentage of their budget on fundraising activities in 2006 than 2002, though productivity declined as they generated less for each dollar spent. And while they increased spending for marketing efforts in 2006 over 2005, this came after four years of flat spending. In contrast to the U.S., the percentage of budget spent on marketing declined since 2002.

Artistic and production spending increased from 2005 to 2006 even as companies produced a smaller number of operas with fewer performances. Canadian companies devoted 64.7% of their budget to artistic and production costs, which is 2.3% more than their American counterparts. They spend a smaller percentage on education activities and administrative costs, though the education portion has grown each year since 2002.

Capitalization of Canadian companies improved with growth in net assets, working capital and investments that far outpaced inflation. Canadian companies' capital components are smaller than the U.S. CSG, however, and only four Canadian companies had positive working capital from 2002 through 2006. As noted earlier, only two of the Canadian companies have significant investments, and investments represent 46% of operating expenses, compared to a U.S. average of 114%.

For Canada and the U.S., the recent increases in contributed revenue are overshadowed by the performance and attendance trends, and raise questions for the future:

- Will the investment in new marketing efforts and education activities bring in new audiences to support companies' artistic growth?
- Will contributed revenue continue to grow in its coverage of expenses?
- Can expansion of endowment funds provide the means to sustain the work on stage?

The Professional Opera Survey for 2007 may begin to answer these questions. 🌐

The complete Annual Field Report is sent to all OPERA America members as a benefit of membership. Additional copies are available to members for \$10 and non-members for \$15. To order, contact Paul Gosselin by calling 212-796-8620, ext. 214, or e-mail PGosselin@operaamerica.org.



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IN MEMORIAM

Canada's arts community showed its heartfelt respects to **Richard Bradshaw** on August 21, 2007, when more than 2,000 people attended his funeral at Toronto's St. James's Cathedral. Bradshaw, the general director of the Canadian Opera Company (COC), died suddenly, six days earlier. Bradshaw, who began his career at the COC in 1988 as a guest conductor, was appointed artistic director in 1994 and then general director in 1998. In his 18 years with the company, he conducted more than 60 productions. Through his unflinching determination, Toronto's new opera house, the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts, was built by the COC. The theater opened in September 2006 with a production of the Ring cycle (Canada's first), conducted by Bradshaw. Born in Rugby, England, in 1944, Bradshaw studied English at the University of London. An organist and pianist, he received instruction in conducting from Sir Adrian Boult at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. He served as chorus master at England's Glyndebourne Festival from 1975 to 1977, and resident conductor of the San Francisco Opera from 1977 to 1989. Bradshaw was 63 years old at the time of his death. He is survived by his wife, Diana, and his children, Jenny and James.

— Colin Eatock

Chari Shanker, who was the production director of the Los Angeles Opera and more recently of Opera Pacific, died on August 19, 2007, of an allergic reaction. She was a legend in the field, not only for her professional accomplishments, but also for her sense of humor and warmth. Over the course of her career, she mentored countless young stage managers and technical production professionals, many of whom now hold prominent positions in opera companies across the country. She worked at Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts in Virginia, Pittsburgh Opera, Houston Grand Opera and several other companies before she joined Los Angeles Opera as production stage manager in 1989, three years after the company's first season. She rose to become production director before she left in 2005. When Plácido Domingo became artistic director, the company presented a record eight new productions during their 2001 season. Shanker earned a bachelor's degree and an M.F.A. in theater from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She is survived by her mother, Brondy Shanker, and her partner, Carl Baird.

— Alexa B. Antopol

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RECENTLY PUBLISHED

BY ALEXA B. ANTOPOL

Opera and Sovereignty: Transforming Myths in Eighteenth-Century Italy Martha Feldman

The University of Chicago Press
ISBN10: 0226241122, hardcover

Performed throughout Europe during the 1700s, Italian heroic opera, or *opera seria*, engaged such figures as Handel, Haydn and Mozart. *Opera and Sovereignty* addresses this genre as cultural history, arguing that 18th-century *opera seria* must be understood in light of the period's social and political upheavals. Taking an anthropological approach to European music, Martha Feldman traces Italian opera's shift from a mythical assertion of sovereignty, with its festive forms and rituals, to a dramatic vehicle that increasingly questioned absolute ideals. She situates these transformations against the backdrop of 18th-century Italian culture to show how *opera seria* both reflected and affected the struggles of rulers to maintain sovereignty in the face of a growing public sphere. In so doing, Feldman explains why the form had such great international success and how audience experiences of the period differed from ours today. Feldman, an associate professor of music and director of undergraduate studies at the University of Chicago Department of Music, is a music historian specializing in 16th-century madrigals and literature, Venetian studies, courtesan cultures, 18th-century opera, Mozart and Elizabethan music and poetry.

Imogen Holst: A Life in Music
Christopher Grogan, Editor
Boydell & Brewer, Ltd.
ISBN13: 9781843832966, hardcover

Imogen Holst (1907-1984) was a

composer and arranger of folksongs, writer on music, conductor and administrator. She also worked as music assistant to Benjamin Britten, of whom she became a friend and close associate. She subsequently continued as artistic director of the Aldeburgh Festival until 1977. This book offers the opportunity for a full assessment of Holst's life and achievements, both in her own words and through assessments by noted scholars. Throughout her life she kept a record of her activities; her writings form the backbone of the volume, ranging from essays on a variety of musical topics to the daily journal that she kept between 1952 and 1954 at the start of her working association with Britten. Here she provides a unique insight into the professional and domestic life of a major composer. Around these writings is woven a biographical narrative by Rosamund Strode, Holst's successor as Britten's music assistant and one of her closest colleagues and friends.

The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century

Alex Ross
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
ISBN10: 0374249393, hardcover

The scandal over modern music has not died down. While paintings by Pablo Picasso and Jackson Pollock sell for a hundred million dollars or more, musical works from Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* onward still send ripples of unease through audiences. At the same time, the influence of modern music can be felt everywhere. Avant-garde sounds populate the soundtracks of Hollywood thrillers. Minimalist music has had a huge effect on rock,

pop and dance music from the Velvet Underground onward. Alex Ross, the music critic for *The New Yorker*, shines a bright light on this world and shows how it has pervaded every corner of 20th-century life. Ross takes us from Vienna before the First World War to Paris in the 1920s, from Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia to downtown New York in the 1960s and 70s. The end result is not so much a history of 20th-century music as a history of the 20th century through its music.

Michael W. Balfe: A Unique Victorian Composer

Basil Walsh
Irish Academic Press
ISBN13: 9780716529477, hardcover

Michael William Balfe (1808-1870) rose to fame in London in 1835 immediately after the premiere of his first opera, *The Siege of Rochelle*. For the next 35 years, this Dublin-born musician was one of the most important operatic composers in Victorian Britain. Balfe also achieved success in cities such as Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Bologna, Palermo, Trieste and St. Petersburg. This definitive biography corrects many anecdotal errors of previous books. It unearths many new facts about Balfe the man, his work, his descendents, his legacy and influence, including his role as a music director at London's Italian Opera House, where he directed the local premieres of several Verdi operas. This volume lists all of his operas with premiere casts and the principal arias, and identifies the current location of all known Balfe scores and music, including his early Italian compositions, many of which have been deemed "lost" by scholars. 📖



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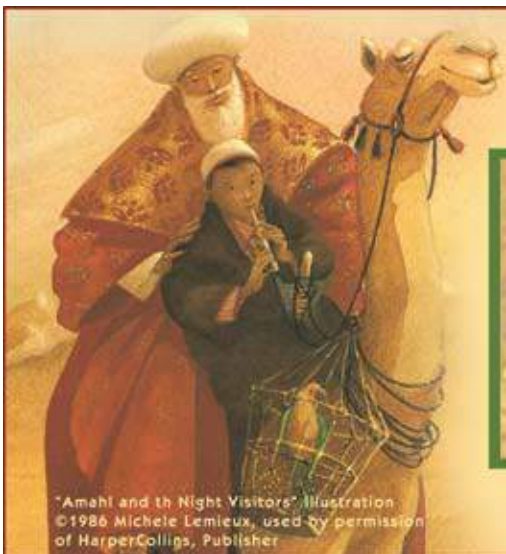


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