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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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ON THE COVER: John Fanning as Casanova and Jean Stilwell as Madame d'Urfé in The Minnesota Opera's production of Argento's *Casanova's Homecoming*, directed by James Robinson with design by Paul Steinberg (set), James Schuette (costume) and Aaron Black (lighting). Photo by Michal Daniel.

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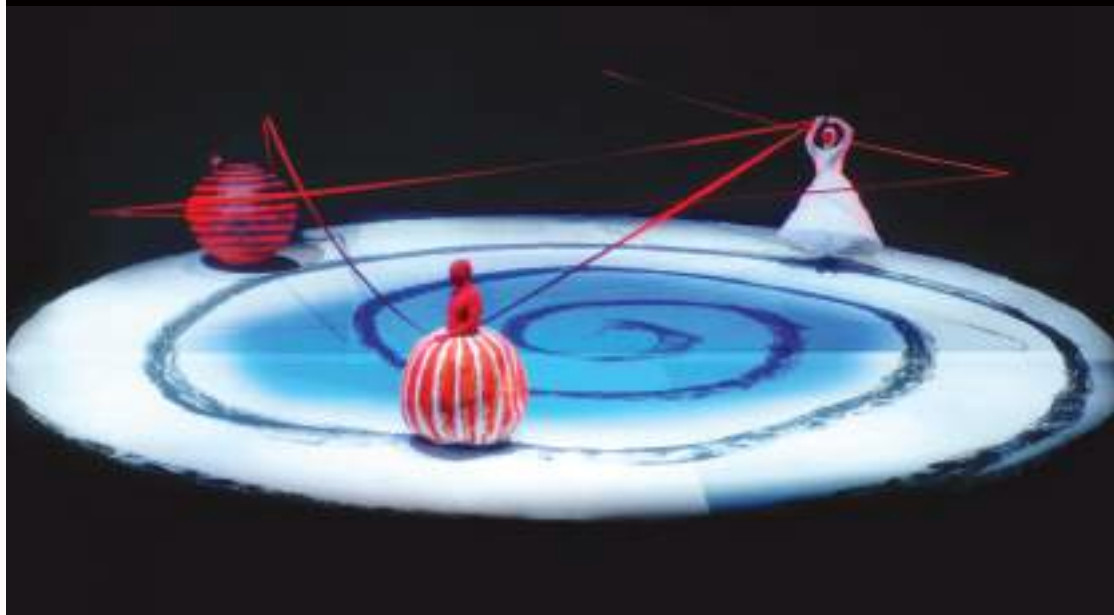
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As we move beyond the initial shock of the financial crisis, administrators, trustees and artists are being challenged to navigate through a fundamentally altered landscape. *Opera Conference 2010: New Realities | New Strategies* will engage all opera stakeholders in developing new ways to attain goals during a time of new social and financial dynamics. Register now at www.operaamerica.org/conference.



The emergence of an American repertoire proves that change can occur as a result of sustained determination and strategic investment. This issue of our magazine documents OPERA America's supportive leadership in advancing American opera through a variety of programs spanning more than 20 years. They all have been united by a common goal — to enrich the international opera canon with works that tell universal stories using a contemporary American musical and theatrical vocabulary. It is especially fitting that we take a moment to reflect on our collective impact as we celebrate OPERA America's 40th anniversary.

It is indeed remarkable that the field has moved from a posture of resistance to new works only a few decades ago to one today in which new works projects are protected priorities, even during the most severe economic downturn in memory. In addition to proving the viability of American opera, our success in advancing works of living composers and librettists is tangible evidence that audacious goals are worth embracing and that progress can only be measured over the long-term. Funders today are sometimes skeptical about the potential for creating change in the arts world and often demand that we demonstrate results in the shortest possible timeframe. In opera, we have a tangible example of profound change that results from continued investment.

OPERA America can only take credit for a supporting role, appropriate for a service organization. Our partners include the National Endowment for the Arts and many foundation, corporate and individual donors who share our vision of a cultural environment enlivened by new American operas. The stars are the opera company leaders — staff and trustees — who have been willing to manage the artistic and financial risks associated with producing new works.

This issue features the voices of a range of professionals committed to new work, from producers to funders. And of course, the effort to create an American opera repertoire would not have succeeded without the effort of the artists who have composed and performed the operas that have enriched our lives. The creation of a new work can take several years, from conception to premiere. Composers and librettists assume a tremendous professional risk when the curtain goes up on the first performance of a new opera. Conductors, directors and singers have to grow as artists when they bring life to music and characters that have no prior performance history.

As this issue reaches you, OPERA America's new North American Works Directory, accessible on our Web site, makes its debut. In it, you will find detailed information on nearly 1,000 U.S. and Canadian operas that have premiered in recent years. It is a living, multimedia encyclopedia of North American creativity.

Some things are worth waiting for. After an unsteady century of experiments in North American opera, we can say now that we have created real and lasting change. Turning 40 has its rewards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc A. Scorca". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light gray rectangular background.

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO



Katherine M. Pracht as Rosina and Jason Budd as Bartolo in The Skylight's production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. Photo by Katherine Biehl.

SKYLIGHT OPERA THEATRE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

As the legend goes, the first unofficial performance for the company that was to become **Skylight Opera Theatre** involved two guys, a piano and the works of Gilbert and Sullivan in a room above a coffee shop. Five decades later, the company produces some 90 performances of five shows each year in a 350-seat jewel of a theater, with additional performances in smaller spaces — but has not lost any of its sense of adventure and community spirit.

Amy Jensen, who has recently been named the company's managing director, served as its finance director from 1995-2001. "If you can actually be in love with a place and a job, that's how it has been for me and the Skylight," says Jensen.

Milwaukee is home not only to Skylight, but to Florentine Opera, which complements the Skylight's eclectic offerings with a more traditional season. "The Skylight really fits a different niche," explains Jensen. "The theater itself gives everything we do a very intimate feel. Our production values have had to grow since the early days because we now perform in this lovely theater, but at the same time, we have retained a fair amount of the creative, scrappy, grass-roots culture."

Jensen is also proud of the company's legacy of launching emerging artists. In addition to many of today's Broadway and off-Broadway performers, Skylight's alumni include Francesca Zambello and Stephen Wadsworth, who served as co-artistic directors in the 1980s. "I've always heard from the artists that it is really a special experience to work here — they feel supported and embraced and part of the process." Many of those artists recently joined forces for "The Sky Is Not Falling," a benefit in New York City. "It was such a great mix of artists from our past, present and future."

Skylight's colorful past seems, at times, like the stuff of opera. (*The Thirty Years War? Three Decades at Skylight*, written by former Artistic Director and Managing Director Colin Cabot and available at www.skylightopera.com, makes for particularly entertaining reading.) But Jensen's focus is squarely on the future. "There will always be new territory to cover, and I'm very excited that Bill Theisen is going to be involved as artistic director. I look forward to working with him, to doing all we can to pull the team together. All the components are in place." 🍷

“THE STRESS IS MIXED WITH UNBRIDLED ELATION.”

For more than 30 years, Dallas arts lovers have dreamed of a Downtown Arts District. That dream is finally becoming reality with a four-venue complex that includes The Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House, which officially opened on October 23, 2009, with a new production of *Otello*.

Designed by Foster + Partners under Pritzker Prize-winning architect Norman Foster, The Winspear Opera House provides performance spaces for **The Dallas Opera**, Texas Ballet Theater, traveling Broadway productions and numerous other performing arts organizations and touring productions. Although the theater was built to adapt to many kinds of performances, it was planned with the specific needs of opera in mind.

A 21st-century reinterpretation of the traditional horseshoe opera house, the Winspear Opera House's principal performance space, the Margaret McDermott Performance Hall, seats 2,200 and features a spacious fly-tower and variable acoustics. The Winspear also includes the Nancy Hamon Education and Recital Hall, for smaller performances seating audiences up to 200, as well as classes, rehearsals, meetings and events.

The new theater will allow the company to perform in a repertory schedule, which will begin later in the season. “We knew we would be insane to try to open our first show in the theater and perform in rep for the first time, so *Otello* is a stand-alone,” says Artistic Director Jonathan Pell. “When we come back, we will open *Così*, then add *Don Pasquale* a week later, so that people can travel to Dallas and see both in a weekend.” In the spring, the company will present the world premiere of *Moby-Dick* (Jake Heggie/Gene Scheer).

“It has been stressful, obviously, but the stress is mixed with unbridled elation,” says Pell. “The sound is beyond our wildest dreams. There is a quality and clarity in all ranges. The subtlety with which the orchestra can now play, with which the singers can perform — it’s just amazing. And the theater itself is understated and elegant. It has the feel of a 19th-century space, but is still very contemporary.” 🎭

The Winspear Opera House. Photo by Karen Almond, The Dallas Opera.



“IT’S A VERY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE FROM SINGING A CHORUS FROM *EUGENE ONEGIN*.”

Members of the Sarasota Youth Opera not only sing chorus in mainstage productions of **Sarasota Opera**, they perform an opera of their own each year. Since the standard repertory doesn’t provide a lot of material for a cast ranging in age from eight to 18, the children’s experience frequently includes the work of living composers.

In 2004, Sarasota Youth Opera presented the world premiere of *The Language of Birds* (John Kennedy/Peter Krask). “The composer spent a lot of time with the kids and really looked at their abilities,” says Executive Director Susan T. Danis. “They really felt this opera was being written for them. It’s a very different experience from singing a chorus from *Eugene Onegin*.”

The children are “immersed in the life of the opera company,” says Danis. “We bring them in for conversations with the stage directors, allow them to sit in on staging rehearsals. Two of them asked for administrative internships. Last year, of nine graduating seniors, seven went on to study voice — one at Juilliard. Others are majoring in voice performance with a minor in music business.”

Dean Burry’s *The Hobbit*, originally written for the Canadian Children’s Chorus, was produced by Sarasota Youth Opera in 2008; the composer spent time in Sarasota and revised the work based on the abilities of the cast. In 2010, the Youth Opera will perform Judith Weir’s *The Black Spider*. The company’s next commission, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, will have a libretto by J.D. McClatchy and a score by Daron Hagen.

For Danis, the opportunity to work with contemporary opera creators is another important way to make opera come alive for young people. “I think it’s a really different experience for children to be able to perform a fully-staged, professional opera — one that was created for them.” 🎭

Sarasota Youth Opera’s production of Kennedy’s *The Language of Birds*. Photo by Debra Hesser.





A set rendering for Ash Lawn Opera Festival's production of Loewe's *Camelot*. Set design by Brian C. Barker.

"NOW IT WILL BE MUCH EASIER."

In summer 2009, **Ash Lawn Opera Festival** moved its mainstage operas from a makeshift outdoor stage to Charlottesville's Paramount Theater. The first operas were produced in the Boxwood Gardens of Ash Lawn-Highland, the home of James Monroe, in 1978. In 2000, under the leadership of General Director Judith H. Walker, the opera festival was separately incorporated and began growing modestly — but steadily. What began as three evenings of lectures and one-act operas has grown to six to eight weeks of full-length opera and musical theater productions, lectures, the Music at Twilight and Summer Saturdays series, and many educational programs.

The move is not without its losses, notes Walker. "When it's a perfect night, there is no better place to be than outside at Ash Lawn. But when you have rain and heat it gets very difficult. At one point we talked about building a performance facility at Ash Lawn, but it's owned by the state and we couldn't work out details. The Paramount Theater is a historic movie theater, owned by the community, which has been restored beautifully." In addition to protection from the elements, the theater offers the company many amenities — an orchestra pit, a fly loft, a lighting rig. "The Paramount has staff that manage the box office — I cannot tell you what a wonderful relief that is."

The Paramount has a capacity of 1,100, as compared to the 400 seats available at Ash Lawn-Highland, so the company offered 12 performances this season — half of last year's 24. "We really struggled at the beginning, because some people were upset that we moved. But by the end of the summer everyone just loved the Paramount." And the company has not left its namesake landscape entirely — all fresco programs in the Boxwood Gardens are planned for future festival seasons.

Walker, who has been with the company for 23 years, will retire at the end of 2009. "I could not have retired while we were at Ash Lawn. The company was glued together with sticks and straw," she says, noting that her responsibilities, until last summer, included wiping afternoon rain from chairs and having a second stage ready for concert performances in case of late-breaking storms. "Now it will be much easier. Chris Larkin will be the artistic director and we are in the process of doing a national search for a general director. I think we won't have any trouble finding a well-qualified person — Charlottesville is a wonderful place, and the company has grown each season." 🍷



Sarah Hagstrom as Emily Webb in Lake George Opera at Saratoga's production of Rorem's *Our Town*. Photo by Joseph Schuyler.

“THIS PROJECT ALLOWED US TO CONTINUE GIVING WORKS BY AMERICAN COMPOSERS.”

When an opera company’s mainstage season comprises three or fewer operas — as is the case with nearly half of OPERA America’s Professional Company Members — it’s difficult to find a place for new work. Or is it?

For the past four seasons, **Lake George Opera at Saratoga** has presented a performance or workshop of a work by a living composer. In 2009, members of the company’s young artist program presented a workshop performance of Persis Parshall Vehar’s *Eleanor* on the mainstage, to a nearly full house. As a pre-performance discussion, Artistic Director Curtis Tucker interviewed the composer onstage, working in questions from the audience.

Often, opera companies schedule workshops of operas they intend to produce in future seasons, but that was not the goal here, according to Tucker. “We do not have any further plans with the piece. We view our role as developmental.” The company distributed surveys to the audience, which were then turned over to the composer.

“The audience responses were quite strong, both on the positive and the negative side,” says Tucker. “The fact that Eleanor Roosevelt is a well-known figure, especially in this region, and the fact that American politics is ever-present in the piece, brought out strong reactions. From the company’s perspective, we were extremely pleased. In a season where our other repertoire (*Madama Butterfly* and *Don Pasquale*) was very mainstream, this project allowed us to continue giving works by living American composers, to provide a performance for young artists and to provide our audience with opportunities to experience a new work.” 🍷



Kelly Kaduce as Nedda and Tonio DiPaolo as Canio in Opera Omaha's 2009 production of Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*. Photo by Jim Scholz.

ENTERTAINMENT GROUPS UNITE TO FEND OFF NEW TAX

In late spring of this year, Mayor Jim Suttle of Omaha, NB proposed several tax initiatives with hopes of closing the city's \$10.5 million budget gap. On the list of tax proposals was an entertainment tax of two percent to be placed on all businesses that could be classified as "entertainment" including restaurants, performing arts organizations, museums, sports venues and movie theaters.

When John Wehrle, general director of **Opera Omaha**, learned of the proposal, he reached out to his board, as well as fellow arts and entertainment leaders. Joan Squires, president of the Holland Performing Arts Center, immediately stepped up to the plate and with other arts leaders, adapting the structure of a defunct advocacy group called Arts Aim (formerly associated with the United Arts Fund) to the purpose of analyzing the impact of the proposed tax and developing the sector's response. The Holland Performing Arts Center and Opera Omaha were joined by the Children's Museum, the Omaha Symphony, the Omaha Community Playhouse, the Joslyn Museum of American Art, the Henry Doorly Zoo, and even connected with the hotel association among several other groups. The coalition tapped a public relations expert and began to meet at least every 10 days to discuss strategies and action steps.

Members of the alliance of entertainment groups, including Wehrle, began to attend Omaha City Council meetings and organized an e-mail and phone campaign in advance of the Council's vote on the new tax proposal. Each arts and entertainment group shared a form letter with constituents, and all members engaged in calling City Council members.

On September 11, the Omaha City Council voted against implementing a two percent tax on entertainment. Members of the coalition have agreed to meet periodically, both to share information regarding general conditions in the community that affect cultural institutions and to remain prepared for what appears to be a likely revisiting of the tax proposal as the city continues to address its budget problems. 🇺🇸

NEW YORK CITY OPERA COMPLETES THEATER RENOVATIONS

New York City Opera opened its season in November 2009 with *American Voices*, a concert celebrating American opera and American artists, followed by the long-awaited revival of *Esther* (Hugo Weisgall/Charles Kondek). The season is the company's first in the newly-renovated David H. Koch Theater.

The theater has undergone a number of acoustical enhancements, including the enlargement of the orchestra pit, the installation of a mechanical lift and the modification of the stage apron. The changes allow the orchestra to play in the pit at any depth, or as high as stage level for concert performances. Other acoustical interventions, including the removal of carpet from the floor and rear walls of the auditorium and the addition of new acoustic side walls near the proscenium, will improve the musical experience for the audience. Thanks to these interventions, the electronic acoustic enhancement system installed in the theater since 1999 has been removed.

The renovation also includes the addition of a complete onsite media suite. Amenities for the audience include two new side aisles at the orchestra level, entirely new seats, new prime spaces for patrons with disabilities, refurbished restrooms and more. 🏠



The David H. Koch Theater renovation. Photo by Jon Simon.

Scott Altman has been appointed as the general director of **Arizona Opera**. Previously, Altman co-founded Opera New Jersey with his wife, Lisa, and most recently served as its general and artistic director. Altman's progression to artistic and general director of an opera company was informed by his earlier career as a professional singer. He has performed bass-baritone roles with companies such as New York City Opera, Arizona Opera, San Francisco Opera and Austin Lyric Opera. His most recent appearance with Arizona Opera was in the role of Ashby in the 2001 production of *The Girl of the Golden West*.

After 23 years at the helm of **Ash Lawn Opera Festival** (Charlottesville, VA), General Director **Judith H. Walker** announced her retirement effective December 31, 2009. Walker has led the opera company from the first productions in the Boxwood Gardens at Ash Lawn-Highland to more and more sophisticated and elaborate productions, culminating this past summer in performances at the Paramount Theater. During her leadership, Walker emphasized the importance of the Ash Lawn Opera Festival as a training ground for young professional singers. Under her management, the company also provided educational programs for music teachers and students in the local schools, as well as productions for children.

Three key management positions at **Florida Grand Opera** (FGO) will have new incumbents for the 2009-2010 season. **Brendan Glynn** began in September as director of marketing. Glynn's career in South Florida has included serving as director of marketing and communications for the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale, FGO's second venue, in addition to the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts where Miami mainstage performances are given. **Peter Somogyi** joined FGO in October as director of artistic administration. Somogyi's career has included positions with San Francisco Opera, the Metropolitan Opera Association in New York, Los Angeles Opera, and most recently, Opera Pacific in Costa Mesa, CA. Glynn and Somogyi join **Lisa Bury**, who joined FGO in June as director of development. Previously, Bury held positions at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Arizona Opera.

Director of Information Services **Melanie Feilotter** joined **OPERA America** in September 2009. Feilotter coordinates content for OPERA America's Web site, publications and its professional development program. She holds a B.M. in music history with a concentration in piano performance and an M.A. in musicology, both from McGill University in Montreal.

Feilotter also earned a certificate in German-to-English translation from New York University. Prior to joining OPERA America, Feilotter spent 11 years with Bloomberg News in a number of capacities, including as manager of their multimedia news department, and as a producer for Bloomberg Television.


Amy S. Jensen has been appointed as the next managing director of **Skylight Opera Theatre**. This is a return to The Skylight for Jensen; between 1995 and 2001, she served as the finance director. She has also held positions at the Milwaukee Art Museum, the United Performing Arts Fund and most recently as the VP and CFO of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Jensen has provided consulting services for several Milwaukee-area nonprofits and has been invited to speak at a variety of local and national conferences such as Theatre Wisconsin, Association of Fundraising Professionals and Americans for the Arts. Additionally, **Bill Theisen** has been re-appointed as artistic director. Theisen will re-assume the position through June 30, 2011, and will manage productions and planning. He plans to direct up to two shows next season, which will reflect a program planned collaboratively with Interim Artistic Director Colin Cabot. 🎭

OPERA AMERICA BEGINS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

OPERA America launched a strategic planning process in July 2009 to articulate priority issues and specific actions that can be taken to advance the art form and the field over the next decade.


OPERA America's most recent strategic plan, approved in 1998, led to the establishment of *The Opera Fund* (a permanent endowment dedicated to supporting the creation, production and enjoyment of new work) and the company's relocation from Washington, D.C. to New York. Based on the tremendous positive impact of the last plan, staff are working with members to establish objectives that respond to the dominant trends shaping our field. The planning process is expected to lead to new programs and the refinement of time-honored services, as well as a stronger relationship between OPERA America and members.

A Strategy Committee was established that includes experts from across the field, including administrators, artists and trustees. John A. Blanchard, III, an emeritus director of The Minnesota Opera, is serving as chairman. The committee will meet three times before finalizing a plan for review by Voting Members at the Annual Business meeting held in conjunction with the Annual Conference taking place in Los Angeles from June 9-13, 2010.

Broad membership involvement is essential to the success of the planning process. In addition to meetings of the Strategy Committee, OPERA America staff are leading a series of telephone conference calls with well over 100 members from various specialty networks to gain additional insight and suggestions. Further drafts of the plan will be made available to members on the OPERA America Web site in January 2010 for additional input. 

OPERA AMERICA INTRODUCES WEBINARS

OPERA America Webinars cater to opera professionals, offering timely, expert discussions on the topics most pressing to the field. Webinars can either be watched live over the Internet or accessed in archived form on OPERA America's Web site. You can submit questions by e-mail before or during the event. This list is an advance preview; view updates on www.operaamerica.org or contact MFeilotter@operaamerica.org for more information.


- December 9, 2009: **Enjoy Responsibly: Workplace Alcohol and Social Hosting Policies** with The Santa Fe Opera Administrative Director Thomas Morris and Human Resources Director Liz Kellogg, and DiMento & Sullivan Attorney Carolyn Conway
- January 2010: **Make Better Marketing Your New Year's Resolution** with smArts & Culture's Mary Ann Devine
- February 2, 2010: **Planned Giving Strategies** with National Madison Group's Thomas Bonhag
- March 17, 2010: **Taxing Foreign Artists** with FTM Arts Law Attorney Robyn Guilliams
- March 2010: **Securing Major Gifts** with Coralie Toevs, assistant manager of development at the Metropolitan Opera
- April 2010: **Communicating the Public Value of Opera** with the Corporation from National and Community Service
- May 18, 2010: **Turning Learners Into Ticket Buyers** with San Francisco Opera Director of Education Ruth Nott
- July 2010: **Innovative Onstage Multimedia: Learning Digital Design**
- August 3, 2010: **Social Media Tools for Nonprofits** with blogger and author Beth Kanter
- August 10, 2010: **Opera MythBusters: Talking to Teens** with Fort Worth Opera's Clyde Berry 

CULTURAL DATA PROJECT

The Professional Opera Survey (POS) is going paperless! OPERA America and the Cultural Data Project (CDP) have teamed up to create an online version of the POS. OPERA America member organizations will now complete the CDP's standardized online form for arts and cultural organizations, followed by several sections of opera-specific questions. This powerful online management tool will streamline the annual data collection process and provide all statistics for future POS Reports.

OPERA America member organizations can use the CDP to produce a variety of reports designed to help increase management capacity, identify strengths and challenges, and inform decision-making.

OPERA America member organizations in California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania can use the CDP as one part of the grant application to participating funders. As other states adopt the CDP, more and more member organizations will enjoy this benefit.


OPERA America will host a webinar in early 2010 to introduce members to the new format and instruct them about how to derive maximum benefit from the CDP. For more information, contact Larry Bomback at LBomback@operaamerica.org. 

OPERA AMERICA'S TRUSTEE WEEKEND IN NEW YORK

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San Francisco Opera's world premiere production of Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Photo by Terrence McCarthy.

“To Promote the Expansion and Growth of the Art Form”

OPERA America and American Opera

By Kelley Rourke

When 17 opera companies came together to create OPERA America in 1970, they articulated a number of goals toward the advancement of the opera. However, it was not until the 1980s that field-wide momentum began to gather around new work.

In 1979, members voted to include a Composer-Librettist Showcase in conjunction with the organization’s annual conference. The first showcase took place in New Orleans in 1981. Fifty-two works were submitted for consideration; seven were chosen for concert presentation, followed by a discussion with composers, librettists and producers. A 144-page volume was published to accompany the showcase and seminar; in addition to a catalog of all the nominated works, it included essays on the state of contemporary opera production. The conversation had begun.

In the years that followed, OPERA America led several initiatives to promote the expansion and growth of the art form. Three landmark regranting programs lessened the financial risk and encouraged companies to add commissions or subsequent productions of American work to their seasons. The success of these programs eventually led to the creation of *The Opera Fund*, a growing permanent endowment dedicated to enhancing the quality, quantity and creativity of new opera and music-theater. *The Opera Fund* and its precursor programs have awarded nearly \$11 million in funds to companies throughout

North America in support of their efforts to expand and enrich the repertoire.

At the same time, the organization worked at many levels to increase opera professionals’ knowledge about commissioning, audience development and contemporary artists and their work. Creative artists including John Adams, Carlisle Floyd, Philip Glass, Osvaldo Golijov, Terrence McNally and Julie Taymor have delivered the Keynote Address at annual conferences; countless others have served on panels to discuss the state of the art. Publishers and composers have served on the board of directors.

In 2003, OPERA America hosted its first composer-librettist workshop. The organization’s move to New York has facilitated a regular series of professional development events under the umbrella *Making Connections*. The annual conference resumed a showcase event, the *New Works Sampler*, in 1999, and OPERA America regularly features performances of new work at important events such as the National Opera Trustee Recognition Program.

The landscape for American opera has changed tremendously since OPERA America’s founding; 75 percent of professional company members have produced an opera written in the past three decades. As we celebrate 40 years of expansion of the American repertory, we look forward to the decades of growth to come.

Opera for the 80s and Beyond

In December 1983, The Rockefeller Foundation provided OPERA America with \$250,000 to hire a program director and cover the first grants for a new regranting program designed to support the development and production of new opera and music-theater.

While there was excitement about the availability of new funds, many remained skeptical. At the planning meeting for the new initiative, one of the participants commented that “there were 1,700 composers in Western Europe when Mozart was alive. I would like you to name me 10.” Asked about his plans for new operas in San Francisco, Terry McEwen said, “I would love to commission operas, but I can’t. I’d

have to be able to afford a hundred failures for every three successes.” “*Opera for the 80s and Beyond* was a way of getting to a core concern, which was cost,” said Martin Kagan, who served as executive director of OPERA America from 1980-1990. “One of the complaints that companies had was that new works are very expensive. It became one of the priorities of OPERA America in its desire to lead the field — not just to respond its needs, but to be proactive.”

Opera for the 80s and Beyond (OFTEAB) employed several strategies to jump-start creativity in the field. David DiChiera, who was president of OPERA America at the time of the launch, wrote: “It was clear that Howard [Klein, of The Rockefeller

Foundation] felt that some of the most creative work was taking place outside the opera world. I was absolutely excited that he agreed with me that it was necessary to effect a change within the opera field and not let opera companies be ‘end run’ by the creation of new music-theater within other fields, for that would serve to accentuate even more the atrophy current within our industry.”

The project, which grew out of discussions between Kagan, Klein and DiChiera, was presented to OPERA America members in December 1983, at a conference in New York City. A featured event at the conference was a concert called “New Directions in Opera,” which included works by Bob Telson, Meredith Monk,

HOW TO REINSERT THE COMPOSER INTO THE EQUATION OF AMERICAN OPERA?

Miami is oppressive in June. It’s hot. The air is thick. It rains every afternoon. When you’re not air conditioned, your clothes stick to you. Locals call it the “shoulder” season. As in: shoulder of the road. Not where the traffic is, but where you go when you break down.

The late Bob Herman’s New World Festival was a grand design. The Greater Miami Opera would organize events in all art forms. Artists would be commissioned to do new works. It would be the largest arts festival ever held in the South. But to get sizable funds from Miami and Dade County, such an event had to attract tourists, and when were tourists needed? In the shoulder season. It had to be June.

So it was that I, along with many others, sweated or were rained on in Miami in that muggy, steamy, stifling June of 1982. Nor were we few, alas, the megacrowd of tourists needed to pad Miami’s shoulder season. The Festival’s box office did poorly, ending up in the red. Bob had opposed June. He was right.

As director for the arts at The Rockefeller Foundation, I had provided support to commission Festival artists. There were to be new plays, dances, a new opera. Christo would surround the Channel Islands in pink

plastic collars. Among the arts mavens there was Martin Kagan, then executive director of OPERA America. We met. Martin invited me to lunch and asked, “Why doesn’t Rockefeller fund opera?”

“Because opera has turned its back on the composer,” I answered, eating my fruit salad. “Most American opera companies are about stars performing a limited repertory of established works, not in contributing to the development of a living art form.” Martin said, “Well, let’s talk about that.” So we did. *Opera for the 80s and Beyond* was the result.

The creator is central to the arts and was also central to programming at The Rockefeller Foundation then. Institutions exist to connect creators and their work to the public. Most people earning money in opera in 1982 rode the backs of a handful of dead composers. Opera was performers, singers, conductors, directors, not creators. That egregious situation presented a foundation that thought itself a problem solver with a superb problem: How to reinsert the composer into the equation of American opera?

The heyday of American opera resulted from the Ford Foundation’s commissioning program in the 1960s.

Anthony Davis and Robert Ashley. Member reactions to both the concert and OFTEAB were mixed, but in the end the membership accepted the initial grant from Rockefeller and the program went forward. Additional funding came from The National Endowment for the Arts, Pew Charitable Trusts, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Ford Foundation and The Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

"We had to admit that as a group, those of us who were responsible for the repertoire were not exposed to and aware of what was happening creatively outside our narrow world of opera," wrote DiChiera.



Music-Theatre Group's production of Taymor's *Juan Darien, A Carnival Mass*. Photo courtesy of Music-Theatre Group.

Those new operas made a difference to the repertory, but the commissioning evaporated when the funds dried up. It was clearly time for a new heyday.

Commissioning and producing new work consumes artists and companies, time and lots of money. The risks are enormous. A half a million dollars (then) to produce a new opera that may fail and disappear after one season, never amortizing the production costs? And, unlike theater, which nourished playwrights through workshops and productions, opera had no farm team for creators.

The question was how to reduce the financial and artistic risks of commissioning opera. If risk were reduced, would companies find commissioning less threatening to their budgets and box offices? Were there intrepid souls out there among the company directors who would gamble if the stakes were lowered? Would composers emerge?

Martin and I, with help from Ann Farris, then Opera/Musical Theater program director at the National Endowment for the Arts, called a meeting of professionals from opera, music, theater and television

for August 1983. Thirty of the renegade faithful gathered, hammered away at questions and each other. Impasse. The conference stalled, broke down, then was restarted. Groups broke out. Butcher paper lined the walls and was covered with magic marker. Multi-colored outlines hung everywhere. Recommendations, accumulating like Martin Luther's 95 Theses, were listed and nailed to the door of the Holy Operatic Church. These new Protestants wanting their Reformation had come up with so many positive solutions, so many possible courses of action. Where to start?

Back at my desk in September, I chose a handful of ideas aimed at changing the commissioning process, and structured a program my board might fund. The program would attempt to reduce risk through a series of inexpensive steps prior to the commissioning of a new work. In 1983, I told my board, only four new American works were to be premiered out of the hundreds of performances by American companies. Could a new approach make a difference?

Howard Klein was an officer in the arts program of The Rockefeller Foundation from 1967 to 1986; he served as a panelist at several OPERA America conferences. The above is excerpted from OPERA America's Opera for the 80s and Beyond: Final Report.

Building awareness is a full-time job, and the grant included funds for the creation of a full-time project supervisor. Ben Krywosz joined the staff in April 1984, and began meeting with leaders of opera companies across the country. Many continued to cite cost concerns, but OFTEAB funds called their bluff.

“It became apparent that money was only part of the problem,” wrote Krywosz. “In fact, opera companies didn’t produce new works because it wasn’t their job. The implicit (and sometimes explicit) mission of most opera companies was to produce masterpieces of 18th- and 19th-century

European opera. Creating new work was a completely different activity that was not particularly compatible with the production process of most opera companies.”

But Krywosz — “Johnny Operaseed” — persisted. The first grants were in the Exploration category. These modest grants paid travel expenses for general directors to familiarize themselves with new opera and music-theater being produced in venues across the United States. They took in a variety of works, from *Akhnaten* to *Les Miserables*, *Nixon in China* to *X*. They also attended conferences and colloquia focused on new works.

Back in the OPERA America office, staff produced a newsletter that introduced members to artists such as Laurie Anderson and Roberto Sierra. “Giving grants was not the sole purpose of the program,” said Kagan. “It was to draw awareness to what was going on — in Kansas City, in Omaha, everywhere. Ben was there to provide information and guidance at all stages.”

In OFTEAB’s second year, the first Team Building and Development Grants were awarded. These underwrote initial meetings with the composer and librettist, as well



Kentucky Opera’s 1988 production of Glass’s *Full of the House of Usher*. Photo by Richard Bram.



Dina Emerson as Alexandra in Houston Grand Opera’s production of

“IT WAS NATURAL, AS THE AMERICAN GENERATION TOOK OVER OPERA COMPANIES, FOR

At the time I signed our first commission, there was a somewhat cynical attitude that premieres were a way to get attention, a means to an end. Then, I saw how audiences responded to American works like *Treemonisha*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Susannah*, and then *The Seagull* — our first commissioned work. I saw that new works really did work, really did bring in new audiences. I began to lose my cynicism. I began to try to find a way to bridge the gap between *Porgy and Bess* and more traditional operas, and to try to find a musical language and structure for opera that could grab an audience the first time around.

I didn’t necessarily know what to expect. I simply followed my nose. When I came on the scene, a lot of companies were run by immigrants, but Houston didn’t have large European communities to keep us in a particular niche of repertoire. It was natural, as the American generation took over opera companies, for the shift to happen.

We were opening a new opera house in Houston in the fall of 1987, and I wanted to do something big. I was in contact with the stage director Peter Sellers, and he said, “What about *Nixon in China* by the composer John Adams?” And, I have to say, I said, “You gotta be crazy. Nixon, Kissinger, Mao, Chou En-lai as characters in an opera?”

as early workshops. Sometimes, as a result of the readings, the opera company decided a work was not appropriate for its audience. This was not considered a failure, but the outcome of a healthy process. The composer and librettist were free to take the work elsewhere; the producing company could continue to seek the production that would have the greatest chance of success.

Commissioning/Production Grants underwrote the costs of producing new works. While it was not necessary for a project to proceed through the Partnership

and Development phases before requesting a Commissioning/Production Grant, OPERA America hoped that such a model could assist companies in mitigating risk. Although not every OFTEAB project resulted in a finished work, over 20 percent of projects had a world premiere mainstage, second stage or education program production.

In all, OFTEAB made grants to 48 of 80 member companies, supporting works including *Nixon in China* (John Adams/Alice Goodman, Houston Grand Opera), *The Aspern Papers* (Dominick Argento, The Dallas

Opera), *Where's Dick?* (Stewart Wallace/Michael Korie, Houston Grand Opera), *Juan Darien* (Eliot Goldenthal/Julie Taymor, Music-Theatre Group), *The Fall of the House of Usber* (Philip Glass/Arthur Yorinks, Kentucky Opera), *McTeague* (William Bolcom/Arnold Weinstein, Lyric Opera of Chicago), *Simon Bolivar* (Thea Musgrave, Virginia Opera), *Mrs. Dalloway* (Libby Larsen/Bonnie Grice, Lyric Opera Cleveland), *Amistad* (Anthony Davis/Thulani Davis, Lyric Opera of Chicago), *Esther* (Hugo Weisgall/Charles Kondek, New York City Opera) and *Atlas* (Meredith Monk, Houston Grand Opera).



Monk's *Atlas*. Photo by Jim Caldwell.



Catherine Malfitano as Trina Sieppe, Ben Heppner as McTeague, Timothy Nolen as Marcus Schouler and Emily Golden as Maria Miranda Macapa in Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of Bolcom's *McTeague*. Photo by Tony Romano.

THE SHIFT TO HAPPEN."

We got involved in *Nixon in China*. We premiered it. Many have called it one of the great operas of the 20th century. And of course John has gone on from there to triumph after triumph. An opera composer needs to interest the public for two, two and a half, three hours over the course of an evening. He has to know how to romance the public with different aspects of what he can do. I think John has this huge ability to be expressive in many different ways, rhythmically, harmonically, melodically.

John Adams is a humanist, a highly moral person. And I believe that has always been at the core of John's works. He cares so much about humanity. Like every great artist, he feels things more intensely than most of us do and he has to find an outlet. That outlet has been his operas,

his symphonic pieces. I think that moral sensibility, even aside from his technical virtuosity, is what has driven these fantastic works.

I was so enthralled with *Nixon* as a first attempt at opera. It was, as with many first operas, controversial with the critics. I think critics like to bear down on newcomers — a kind of bully attitude. Twenty years later critics were saying, "Why aren't you reviving *Nixon in China*?" I said, "Did you read your initial review?"

Under the leadership of David Gockley, Houston Grand Opera presented 35 world premieres. He served as president of OPERA America from 1985-1990 and in 2006 became general director of San Francisco Opera, which presented the world premiere of Appomattox (Philip Glass/Christopher Hampton) in 2007 and The Bonesetter's Daughter (Stewart Wallace/Amy Tan) in 2008.

Opera for a New America

Opera for a New America (OFANA), supported by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, picked up where OFTEAB left off. OFANA ran from 1990-1996 and awarded companies for the commission, development and production of new works. The program also introduced an audience development component, encouraging innovative collaborations between audiences, creative artists, companies and their communities. In the program's final cycle, OPERA America members produced 30 world premieres, including *The Dangerous Liaisons* (Conrad Susa/Philip Littell) at San Francisco Opera and *Harvey Milk* (Stewart Wallace/Michael Korie), co-commissioned by Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera and San Francisco Opera.

OFANA contained a new emphasis on the development and production of new work as a tool to build

relationships between opera companies and their communities, with complementary audience development activities. At the outset, the process of new works development was somewhat conflated with audience development. In subsequent years, the definition of audience development was refined; companies came to understand audience development as a comprehensive process that not only incorporates new work of contemporary significance, but also employs strategies that draw on a company's full range of organizational resources.

"At that time, people were talking about how organizations needed to serve a greater part of their communities," remembers Mikki Shepherd, who served as a project specialist. "A lot of those organizations were downtown, and

their primary market had moved out to the suburbs, so suddenly their immediate communities were people of color."

Many companies sought to tell stories that would have special resonance within their communities. *Diary of an African American* (Hannibal Lokumbe) was produced by Music-Theatre Group (MTG), and the first work-in-progress presentations occurred in the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Houston Grand Opera worked with the Houston Storytellers Guild, Houston Parks and Recreation, and Houston Zoological Society to create a storytelling festival around *Desert of Roses* (Robert Moran/Michael John LaChiusa), a retelling of the Beauty and the Beast story set in post-Civil War America. Los Angeles Music-Center Opera received funding for *A Place to Call Home* (Edward Barnes), a work about young political

"WE MUST NOT LIMIT OURSELVES TO NARROW CONCEPTS OF WHAT OPERA SHOULD OR

I feel that sometimes new works are not done because of the personal tastes of the producer. I don't question the privilege to do this, but I do know that the same producer may privately detest *L'elisir d'amore* but would never think of excluding it from the repertoire of his company because of personal bias. I think it is crucial that all of you who produce opera cast a wide net if, for no other reason, because it eliminates the necessity of your having to find your 10th baritone for *Rigoletto*.

Looking back over opera's 400-year history, it is evident that we must not limit ourselves to narrow concepts of what opera should or shouldn't be. What is the common denominator between *Wozzeck*, *Peter Grimes*, *Il prigioniero*,

Turandot, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* and *Mabagony*, other than the fact that they all employ text and music in a theater setting with an orchestra and were all written within 30 years of each other? The one thing concerning opera about which we should be absolutely dogmatic is the necessity for observing the first and final commandment of the theater: Thou Shalt Not Bore.

Another responsibility I would urge producers to assume is to give a repeat performance, if at all possible, of a work they have premiered, if the work has proven itself on balance at its first unveiling. I cannot praise OPERA America's efforts enough to encourage second, third and fourth productions of new works, but it is equally

refugees who settle in Los Angeles without their families, designed to be performed for and by students. One of the great success stories of the program was *Shining Brow*, Madison Opera's first premiere, which featured the story of native son Frank Lloyd Wright, written by Wisconsin-born composer Daron Hagen.

Companies responded enthusiastically to OFANA, presenting more than 400 proposals for activities related to new works. In the end, OFANA awarded 229 grants totaling nearly \$4 million. Of the projects awarded, nearly 50 percent resulted in world premiere productions. Projects included *The Woman at Otowi Crossing* (Stephen Paulus/Joan Vail Thorne, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis), *Emmeline* (Tobias Picker/J.D. McClatchy, The Santa Fe Opera) and *The Dangerous Liaisons* (Conrad Susa/Philip Littell, San Francisco Opera).



Brian Steele in Lyric Opera of Kansas City's production of Mollicone's *Coyote Tales*. Photo by Douglas Harner.



Mark S. Doss as Cinque in Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of Davis's *Amistad*. Photo by Dan Rest.

SHOULDN'T BE."

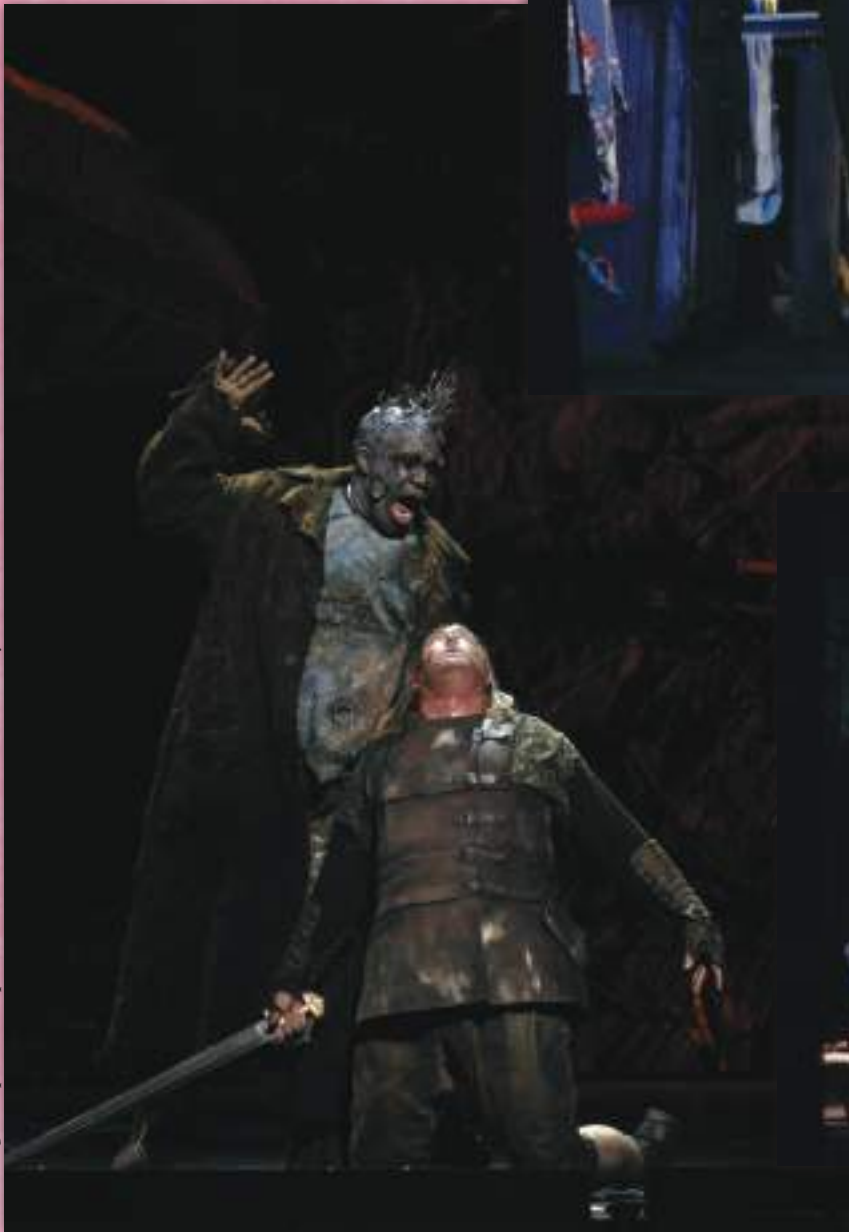
important that the original producer of the work bring it back as quickly as possible. What it says about the producer's confidence and belief in the piece has great psychological weight, as do subsequent productions of the work by other companies. I will be eternally grateful to Julius Rudel for deciding to keep *Susannah* in the repertoire of New York City Opera for a second season, in 1957. The press for the new work had not been unanimously laudatory, as is to be expected with new works, and the somewhat controversial production would have to be scrapped. Also, the box office had not been overwhelming in a generally "off" season for the

company. Nevertheless, Julius Rudel decided to repeat the opera the following season and to invest in a new production. The result was that the opera was successful enough then to warrant its being kept in the repertoire for the following four seasons, by which time some of the critics, on further viewing and listening, had decided that it was better than even my mother thought it was!

The above remarks are excerpted from Carlisle Floyd's Keynote Address at the 1997 OPERA America conference. Floyd is the composer of such popular American operas as Susannah, Of Mice and Men and Cold Sassy Tree. In 2008, he was one of the first recipients of the National Opera Honors from the National Endowment for the Arts.



San Francisco Opera's production of Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Photo by Marty Sohl.



The Los Angeles Opera's 2006 production of Goldenthal's *Grendel*. Photo by Robert Millard.



San Francisco Opera's production of Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*. Photo courtesy of San Francisco Opera.



Music-Theatre Group's production of Lokumbe's *Diary of an African American*.
Photo courtesy of Music-Theatre Group.



Joyce Castle and Robert Brubaker in Washington National Opera's production of Argento's *Dream of Valentino*. Photo courtesy of Washington National Opera.



Opera in the Heartland

During the first decade or so of OPERA America's existence, touring productions from the Metropolitan Opera or San Francisco Opera's Western Opera Theater were the main operatic event in cities across the United States. For the regional opera companies born during this time, it was important to establish a distinct mission, typically emphasizing young ensemble casts, high theatrical values and repertory that went beyond the top 10. As part of their homegrown identity, many regional opera companies have made an important commitment to new and existing American works.

In spring of 1993, Ann Stanke, then general director of **Madison Opera**, spoke to her colleagues at OPERA America's annual conference: "Can a world premiere be done with a staff of two and a very excellent board of directors of 30? I probably should send you all a letter on April 28 with the answer, but my immediate reaction is YES. It's hairy; I need much more staff and I'm close to the point of getting overwhelmed ... No one realized that *Shining Brow** (Daron Hagen/Paul Muldoon) would become as big and as important as it has ... Consider if you will the following: this small company will have coverage twice in the *New Yorker*; it will have a major article in *Opera News*; it will have pro bono ads in the regional editions of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated* and *US News and World Report*. Major articles have been printed in three architectural magazines, the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Phoenix Gazette*. *Shining Brow* has been featured at Taliesin East and the re-dedication of the Guggenheim Museum last June in New York."

Madison Opera's first commission not only sold out two performances, it caught the attention of the entire community. Three OPERA America staff members arriving in Madison for the first performances were asked, "Are you here for the opera?" by the taxi driver taking them from the airport. More recently, the company co-commissioned with Houston Grand Opera and Seattle Opera of *The End of the Affair** (Jake Heggie/Heather MacDonald, Leonard Foglia).

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis has presented 21 world premiere operas and 22 American premiere productions, as well as revivals of American landmarks including *Vanessa*, *Transformations**, *Treemonisha*, *Miss Havisham's Fire**, *Nixon in China* and *The Ghosts of Versailles*. **Opera Omaha**'s world premiere productions include *The Garden of Adonis* (Hugo Weisgall/Jon Olon-Scrymgeour), *Autumn Valentine* (Ricky Ian Gordon/Dorothy Parker), *Requiem Variations* (Andrew Lloyd Webber), *Eric Hermannson's Soul** (Libby Larsen/Chas Rader-Shieber), *Wakonda's Dream** (Anthony Davis/Yusef Komunyakaa) and *The Blizzard Voices** (Paul Moravec/Ted Kooser).

The Minnesota Opera first made its mark as a place to see and hear new and unusual work — in its inaugural season, the company presented the world premiere of *The Masque of Angels* (Dominick Argento/John Olon-Scrymgeour), *The Masque of Venus and Adonis* (John Blow) and *Albert Herring* (Benjamin Britten/Eric Crozier). In addition to reviving many important works, the company presented more than 20 world premieres, many of them under the auspices of its New Music-Theatre Ensemble. (In 1992, the Ensemble was separately incorporated as **Nautilus Music-Theater**, a company dedicated to the development of new work.) In the decade that followed, the larger company commissioned only one new work, *Bok Choy Variations** (Evan Chen/Fifi Servoss), but it presented subsequent productions of many important American works, including *Transatlantic** (George Antheil), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Stephen Paulus/Colin Graham), *The Aspern Papers** (Dominick Argento), *Diary of an African American** (Hannibal Lokumbe), as well as important 20th-century works from other countries like *The Handmaid's Tale* (Poul Ruders/Paul Bentley) and *Joseph Merrick, The Elephant Man* (Laurent Petitgirard/Eric Nonn).

The Minnesota Opera's next commission was, in the words of General Director Kevin Smith, "a game-changer" for the company. *The Grapes of Wrath** (Ricky Ian Gordon/Michael Korie) sold out houses in 2007, catching the attention of not only Twin Cities residents but also the international press. "We asked ourselves what this

might mean moving forward,” said Smith, launching into a seemingly unrelated story: “One of the country’s biggest retailers is headquartered here. They were called the Sound of Music, and one day in the 80s, a huge storm blew through and destroyed their store. They decided to have a tent sale, and it was a huge success — they sold more than they had all year at the main store. It was a game-changer for them. They created a new model based on the tent sale and renamed themselves Best Buy. We saw the success of *The Grapes of Wrath* as a game-changer, too. We wanted to do more than plan the next commission. We decided to create an ongoing, pre-funded program that would not only deal with the creation and production and revival of new works, but would have a component for marketing and education.”

That program, Minnesota Opera Works, is a multi-year, \$7 million commitment. It includes an international co-production, three revivals of American works and three commissions by American composers. This season, the company presented a revival of Argento’s *Casanova’s Homecoming*, which will be followed in subsequent seasons by the world premieres of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* (Ricky Ian Gordon/Michael Korie) and a new work* by Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell.

A regular program of commissioning is not feasible for every company, and that’s fine — a commitment to reviving works commissioned elsewhere is equally important. **Lyric Opera of Kansas City** has produced three world premieres: *John Brown** (Kirke Mechem), *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* (Jack Beeson/Sheldon Harnick) and *Coyote Tales* (Henry Mollicone/Sheldon Harnick). But even more impressive is the company’s long-standing commitment to American work; nearly one-third of the repertory presented in its half-century of existence is American. The company has also produced recordings of the *Taming of the Shrew* (Vittorio Giannini), *The Sweet Bye and Bye* (Jack Beeson/Kenward Elmslie), *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*, *The Devil and Daniel Webster* (Douglas Moore/Stephen Vincent Benet) and *Coyote Tales*. **Chicago Opera Theater** has also made something of a specialty of recent American work; the 35-year-old company counts more than 25 American operas in its repertory.

In 1989, **Lyric Opera of Chicago** launched “Toward the 21st Century,” committing to one 20th-century European and one American opera each season as part of the regular series throughout the 1990s. Within this initiative Lyric commissioned three new works: *McTeague** (William Bolcom/Arnold Weinstein), *Amistad** (Anthony Davis/Thulani Davis) and *A View from the Bridge* (William Bolcom/Arnold Weinstein). In December 1999, the company began a new initiative, “American Horizons,” which continues to make American opera integral in Lyric’s long-range programming. Composer William Bolcom’s third large-scale opera, *A Wedding*, premiered in 2004 during Lyric’s 50th-anniversary season. Existing operas presented under “American Horizons” include *The Great Gatsby* (John Harbison), *Street Scene* (Kurt Weill/Elmer Rice), *Susannah* (Carlisle Floyd), *Sweeney Todd* (Stephen Sondheim), *Regina* (Mark Blitzstein) and *Doctor Atomic* (John Adams/Peter Sellars).

As these companies enter the 21st century, the American operatic landscape is strikingly different; it is now expected that every significant city will host an opera company of its own. For many of these companies a commitment to new work remains an important calling card. “Our new works initiative gives us a strategic advantage,” says Smith. “It enhances our ability to attract artists, to attract co-producers. It elevates our image in the field — we’re now able to do substantial fundraising outside of Minnesota. The whole endeavor is both altruistic and selfish. We will die if we cannot create new product. Our goal is to get this stuff out there. Yes, it’s expensive, and it’s hard. But even in a down economy there are opportunities to be had. In one sense, when it comes to creation of new works, this is a very tough time for opera companies. We have seized on that. It is a perfect time to really assert ourselves.”

* designates works funded by OPERA America

The Next Stage

“For opera to be embraced as a truly North American art form, the standard repertory must grow to include works created by North American artists, not as one-time productions, but as part of the accepted canon. With the continued exposure that builds critical and audience familiarity, works of merit will have a chance to be reevaluated and find their rightful place in the active repertory of professional opera companies.”

— from the guidelines for
The Next Stage

Recognizing that many new works were being forgotten soon after their world premiere performances, OPERA America modified its funding

focus. With major support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, OPERA America awarded over \$1 million from 1995-1998 through *The Next Stage*, a program to help companies present subsequent productions of North American works. The hope was that subsequent performances would allow composers to refine these works and more audiences to experience them.

OFANA had encouraged a new focus on audience development and community partnerships. Companies took these experiences to heart as they planned activities around revivals of American work. For example, Boston Lyric Opera (BLO) placed *Aekhnaten* at the center of an “Egyptian Season” that also

included BLO performances of *Aida*, an exhibit on Pharaohs of the Sun at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, a large-format film on Mysteries of Egypt at the Museum of Science, as well as performances by the Boston Ballet.

Many works funded by OFTEAB and OFANA benefited from *The Next Stage*, including *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Shining Brow*, *The Dangerous Liaisons* and *A Chekhov Trilogy*. The program also encouraged companies to reconsider works such as *The Crucible*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Good Soldier Schweik* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. All of these works have gone on to other productions and are recognized as an important part of the growing North American canon.

“WE HAVE BEEN AFRAID TO TAKE THE HERITAGE OF OPERA AND BUILD UPON IT!”

We have seen many a “world premiere” — how important that sounds, how exciting, how newsworthy! What prestige and national attention it brings to the producer, the company, the city! No one is expected to like the new opera of course. That’s not the point; it’s not supposed to go into the repertory. Other companies don’t want a secondhand work. If they are going to alienate their audiences at great expense with a 20th-century opera, they at least want to enjoy the perquisites of a premiere. How far we have come from the 19th century, when the goal of an opera premiere was popular success, which, if achieved, would be followed immediately by productions in a dozen other cities. Must it be said again that those popular successes are our classics?

What happens today if, contrary to all planning and expectation, the new opera really works? The audience loves it; the critics praise it. Do other companies take it up at once — strike while the iron is hot? Of course not; their seasons are planned three years in advance. This is a chance to get a new American opera in the mainstream, but it passes by. At best the work is produced again only in “alternative spaces” or in university productions. Ignoring the great success, the other producers simply repeat that their big audiences won’t go to new operas and make no effort to follow up on a promising work. Once a little success is achieved, the public may be interested, but the establishment considers its job done and goes on to the next novelty.



Jason Collins in the title role of Chicago Opera Theater's production of Kurka's *The Good Soldier Schweik*. Photo by Liz Lauren.

“ In opera it is almost necessary to borrow themes. Opera is a pretty clumsy narrative. It is better if you can make some assumptions going in. Wagner couldn't have written the *Ring* without assuming people knew something about Norse mythology.

The whole idea is to envision an opera that is for tomorrow what it wasn't yesterday. Something that reflects the incredible collision of cultures, that is both improvised and composed. The whole idea is to find the universal in the contemporary. I think that is one of the beauties of *Klinghoffer*, in these beautiful choruses, this collision, this perception of a world that is embedded in the music. In *Tania*, I was inspired by the Patty Hearst story, but I was also inspired by *Abduction from the Seraglio*. ”

Anthony Davis, the composer of several operas including *X*, *Under the Double Moon*, *Tania*, *Amistad* and *Wakonda's Dream*, made these remarks as part of a panel discussion at Opera Conference 2009.

Put on a really good new opera in your major house with the best talent money can buy and watch the audience respond. But we have been afraid to take the heritage of opera and build upon it. We tear it down, we say it is no longer valid, and then cry when opera lovers don't like our replacements. Then we atone for our sin by funding 132 experiments in 132 alternative spaces. I ask you, isn't this an odd way to revitalize opera?

The first order of business then should be obvious: We must regain the trust of the audience. It will not be achieved by playing down to the audience, but by rising to it — not by formulas or mere novelty, but by honesty, ingenuity, grace and beauty. It must be done one step at a time, and this leads me back to the idea of an American Opera Network.

Let us begin modestly. Four or five companies join together and decide upon one American opera per year — not new; not experimental; but a proven success. This mini-company is not to be a training organization, but should comprise the best American talent that can be found. Crucial to the whole concept is that member companies place these productions in their regular subscription series in the primary opera houses. Only in this way will we induce our best singers, directors and conductors to join.

Kirke Mechem's *Tartuffe* was presented at OPERA America's first Composer-Librettist Showcase in 1981; it has since received more than 370 productions. The above is excerpted from "An American Opera Network," his essay first published by OPERA America in a volume entitled *Perspectives: Creating and Producing Contemporary Opera and Musical Theater* (1983).

“

If you look at the history of the Santa Fe Opera, the company's commitment to new works goes back to the very first season, when we premiered Marvin David Levy's *The Tower*. It was part of Founding General Director John Crosby's extraordinary vision that the company needed to have a distinct identity, and part of that would be mixing new works with standard classics. He had studied with Hindemith at Yale and I think that gave him his predisposition for contemporary music. Mr. Crosby always paid a great deal of attention to what was happening on the European opera scene, and that influence showed in the adventuresome programming during his long and brilliant tenure.

I think of commissioning new works as being akin to conducting scientific experiments — you can assemble all the correct ingredients, and yet you're never exactly sure how the end product will turn out. Will it be a resounding success? Will it be a qualified success? Will it be a complete flop? There is an element of uncertainty that can make general directors skittish, but at the same time I think these days there is much greater acceptance of new works and a greater willingness on the part of company leaders to program operas from many different periods.

Over these many years I've been involved in producing opera, I've come to understand that like everything else in life, successful new works are born from successful relationships, from collaborations based on trust, mutual esteem, knowledge and an understanding of all the complexities involved in this enterprise.

The Santa Fe Opera has a very good record in terms of box office results for new works, especially in the last 10 years. Part of this is due to more sophisticated marketing, but I also think our audience has over time developed a heightened interest in and curiosity about new opera. This past season with *The Letter* (Paul Moravec/Terry Teachout), we saw a very strong demand for tickets. Of course, I'm waiting with bated breath to see what happens in 2010 with the world premiere of *Life is a Dream* (Lewis Spratlan/James Maraniss). It is an unabashedly atonal score, whereas Moravec writes in a very approachable style. Yet I'm optimistic about it because our history of presenting challenging scores over the years has accustomed our audience to expect different styles of music.

When I became general director here in October 2008, the 2009 repertory was already in place but beyond that it was a blank slate. Obviously, there wasn't enough time to commission a new piece and have it ready in time for our 2010 season. And, like every opera company on the planet, we faced significant financial challenges requiring fiscal restraint and significant budget cuts. Still, for my first planned season, I was intent on finding a new piece or an American premiere — and Spratlan's opera seemed a perfect fit. So in this way we are able to continue the noble tradition established by John Crosby, taken to a new level by Richard Gaddes, of enriching the repertory and showcasing new operas that deserve to be seen and heard by a large, knowledgeable and geographically diverse audience. ”

Charles MacKay recently became general director of *The Santa Fe Opera*, where he began his career, working under the leadership of John Crosby. For 23 years he served as general director of *Opera Theatre of Saint Louis*; under his aegis the company presented 13 world premieres. He served as chairman of the board of *OPERA America* from 2005-2008, and remains a member of the board.



Reverberations, Even in the Absence of Funding

The availability of funding for new work provided an important catalyst for opera companies to look beyond the standard repertory beginning in the early 1980s. By the completion of the final regranting program, *The Next Stage*, new and North American works were no longer the exotic choices they had been only 15 years before.

In the years prior to establishment of *The Opera Fund/Canadian Opera Creation Fund*, new and North

American repertoire maintained a presence on the stages of OPERA America members, despite the lack of dedicated funding from OPERA America. From the 1995-1996 through 1999-2000 seasons, the field averaged 17 world premieres per year, with a high of 21 and a low of 10. Many of these premieres represented the culmination of work begun with the support of OFTEAB or OFANA. In addition, the field averaged 21 subsequent productions of North American works each year.

It is interesting to note that during this time two of American operas greatest success stories made their debut: *Little Women*, premiered in 1998 by Houston Grand Opera, has been produced more than 60 times. *Dead Man Walking*, which had its premiere at San Francisco Opera in 2000, has had 24 productions. Other recent works receiving multiple productions include *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Florencia en el Amazonas*, *A View from the Bridge* and *Cold Sassy Tree*.



Daniel Okulitch as Joseph De Rocher in the 2009 Fort Worth Opera Festival production of Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. Photo by Ellen Appel.

“What if you developed new works the way the business community developed new businesses? You don't want to put venture capitalists in charge of developing new work, but you can learn some tricks from them.

The venture capitalists I know identify the market space they want to be in, raise the funds they're going to invest, invest in lots of companies, monitor their investments, then cash out their winners and write off their losers. The phrase you sometimes hear is “seed, select, amplify.” You want to try lots of things, see what's working, get rid of what's not and do more of what is.

And investment isn't just about money. Investment is career and credibility and bragging rights. Who is making what investments? It is multi-dimensional. The foundations or endowments or even the individual donors that are investing, yes, they're putting cash up. But other people — like the artistic team — are investing themselves in a project because they believe in it. Because they think they're going to look back and brag 30 years from now. Money isn't the only currency.”

David McIntosh is a writer and consultant based in Boston, MA. His work focuses on helping people and organizations create business breakthroughs. He served on OPERA America's Board of Directors from 2002-2007. He is the author, with Stan Davis, of *The Art of Business*.

I wrote what I thought was a musical with Stewart Wallace, *Where's Dick?*, a crazy crossover work. It began life at Playwrights Horizons and people said, “Hey, it’s an opera!” Houston Grand Opera took it on and produced it, and I credit them with legitimizing me as an opera librettist, something I had no notion I would or could ever be.

Since that time in the mid-1980s, many opera companies have disbanded their second stages and alternative “black box” type performance spaces. For financial considerations, everything became about the main stage, which limited the opportunities for the bigger opera companies to do alternative works by emerging artists, unless they could slot them into their subscription series. This gave the world a lot of operas performed once, maybe twice, and then straight to oblivion. For the creators, it was years and years of work for very few performances.

Working in opera, I’ve learned that opera companies have their own specific way of doing things, and new operas work best when you take into consideration what an opera company can do best. The “alternative” has to come in the writing and composition of the piece, not from extraordinary external forces it takes to produce it. If you don’t write a show that has an orchestra in the pit, that utilizes the chorus, that can work with an opera company’s rep lighting grid, a work that uses opera singers who don’t need require body microphones and elaborate sound mixing, and that can be mounted within an opera company’s rehearsal limitations, then you aren’t serving the opera company, its audience or your own work. As excellent as your opera may be, if it’s too technologically complicated for an opera company to bring off with expertise, then the mistake is yours. Maybe you should have written it for, say, a festival, or a musical theater venue, or a rock concert arena.

One of the hardest lessons for composers and librettists to learn is that it’s really pointless to write an entire opera and then shop the finished score around. No one is interested. Opera companies want to be in on the conception of a new opera from the very beginning. If you have an idea for an opera you’re dying to write, don’t go to the opera company holding a carton containing your complete orchestrated masterpiece. It will end up right on the slush pile. Instead, go with a seed of an idea, and a forceful one-page description of it, more like a Hollywood pitch. Most of the time you won’t be successful, and so you go back to the drawing board and come up with a new idea. That way, you haven’t devoted five years to creating a work destined to remain unproduced. Sometimes they may like one element of your idea, and an alternative idea may come on the spot, something you may even like better than your original conception. This happens in theater all

the time. Meet people, establish relationships, learn how it works. If you sit alone in your ivory tower laboring over a work that is “owed” a production because it is sheer genius, you are likely to be disappointed.

Maybe the idea that “clicks” comes from the opera company itself, or from a director. And that’s fine. Just because someone hands you a subject you didn’t think of first doesn’t mean you can’t do it your own way. When The Minnesota Opera approached us about *The Grapes of Wrath*, we studied the material, thought about it, and found that it really sang to us. I like that Minnesota Opera had the idea, and ultimately entrusted it to us and our conception of how to do it. That’s called good producing, and when it works, it’s no different from the Broadway model.

It’s a subtle distinction, but what composers and librettists need to understand is that it is not helpful to look at opera as the last bastion of pure artistic expression. With that kind of thinking comes a feeling of “hands-off-my-art” entitlement. Though you may be the world’s greatest undiscovered composer, no one owes your work a \$2 million production. Great opera is great art, but opera also occupies its own small corner of “show biz.” Show business is not your enemy, and failure is not noble. It’s just failure. Mozart understood opera was show business, and it gave him the forum to write some of the world’s greatest, and most successful, masterworks. All producers have the same concern — finding an attractive property that is within their ability to produce successfully. What one needs in this world are producers with enthusiasm and ideas who don’t just wait for things to come in over the transom. They should get involved in the process. That’s their job, and to it they bring their own kind of creative genius. And if that involvement begins to obstruct your vision, it is up to us as composers and librettists to be strong and stand up for ours. I signed a contract for *Harvey Milk* that specified two acts and eight principals. We ended up with three acts and 12 principals. I violated the contract because that’s what the opera needed, and the producer, Houston Grand Opera, understood why the change was necessary and went with it because they were invested in the process from the very beginning. Conversely, if Stewart Wallace and I had written that opera all on our own, and then when it was finished presented the opera company with a complete three-act opera with 12 principals, a host of minor roles, kids and a huge chorus, we would have been politely escorted straight to the elevator.

Michael Korie's opera librettos include Harvey Milk with Stewart Wallace and The Grapes of Wrath and the upcoming The Garden of the Finzi-Continis, both with Ricky Ian Gordon. He also wrote the lyrics for the Broadway musical Grey Gardens, for which he and composer Scott Frankel won the ASCAP Foundation's Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award. He has served as an adjudicator for The Opera Fund, as well as a panelist for several OPERA America conferences and workshops.

The Opera Fund

The generosity of foundations over the 15 years from 1985 to 2000 gave OPERA America the opportunity to gain experience as a funder in the realm of new work. This foundation support also helped to advance the careers of dozens of composers and librettists. While the value of this foundation support cannot be overstated, OPERA America realized that foundations could not be relied upon as permanent sources of program support.

“By the late 1990s, supporting new work had become part of our DNA, part of our core commitment to the art form and to our members,” says Marc A. Scorca, president and CEO of OPERA America. “The board determined it was time to build a permanent endowment so our support of new work and related audience development activities could continue without interruption.”

The Opera Fund is a growing endowment that allows OPERA America to make a direct impact on the ongoing creation and presentation of new opera and music-theater works. The fund, launched with support from The National Endowment for the Arts in 2001, has been supported thus far by the Helen F. Whitaker Fund, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Canada Council for the Arts, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The James S. and John L. Knight Foundation, The George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation, Lee Day Gillespie and Lloyd and Mary Ann Gerlach.

The Opera Fund and its sister program, *The Canadian Opera Creation Fund*, build on nearly two decades of experience funding new works and related audience development activities. “The early grants supported projects

that took some opera companies and their communities by surprise,” says Scorca. “A lot of the early grants supported works that were rooted in the experimental edges of the opera/music-theater form. Audiences that had grown up with standard repertory did not immediately embrace works that used a new musical vocabulary. By the time we moved into the 1990s, there was a greater commitment to audience development that worked in parallel with the creative process. Audience Development grants enabled audience members and other company stakeholders to become familiar with the artists, their style of composition and the new work that was receiving its premiere. Relatively modest investment in this area resulted in greater receptivity to the work itself and greater appreciation for the complex process of creating and producing a new opera.”



Danielle Pastin is Rosasharn in Pittsburgh Opera's production of Gordon's *Grapes of Wrath*. Photo by David Bachman and courtesy of Pittsburgh Opera.



Robert Gierlach as Vronsky and Kelly Kaduce as Anna in Florida Grand Opera's 2007 world premiere performance of Carlson's *Anna Karenina*. Photo by Deborah Gray Mitchell.

The Opera Fund continues to offer development, production and audience development monies. It also provides support for exploration, documentation and artist development. It emphasizes consortia, so applicants are encouraged to “build in” future development and performances. Recent recipients of *The Opera Fund* grants include such highly-acclaimed works as *Doctor Atomic* (John Adams/Peter Sellars), *Margaret Garner* (Richard Danielpour/Toni Morrison), *Ainadamar* (Osvaldo Golijov/David Henry Hwang), *Frau Margot* (Thomas Pasatieri/Frank Corsaro) and *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Opera Fund provides OPERA America's first opportunity to fund individual artists. “When it comes to commissions, we have chosen to make grants to companies, rather than to individual artists, because we don't want to create a situation where composers are writing operas with no prospect of production,” says Scorca. “However, when you

look back at the 19th century, the sheer volume of production at opera companies across Europe provided an extended opportunity for composers and librettists to experiment and practice. They had the chance to write 10 or 12 operas before producing what we would consider a hit. Without this kind of productivity, creative artists don't have nearly as much opportunity to develop their skills on the job. We recognized that separate from any particular project, artists could benefit from specific skill development. The artist development category is designed to provide that support. The Director-Designer Showcase that we initiated last year with help from the NEA is an example of how OPERA America was able to showcase the tremendous talent of four teams out of the 41 that submitted proposals.”

Having launched *The Opera Fund*, OPERA America has a framework for ongoing support of the creation and production of new works,

the identification and nurturing of aspiring artists and audience development. This gives the organization the opportunity to “change the conversation,” according to Scorca. “Not only do we fund new operas, but we are able to have excerpts performed at our conference and other events. We are able to talk about new works and artists in our magazine. The new operas we fund — and many we don't — are documented on our Web site. Moving to New York has already enabled us to increase this amplifier effect because we are in closer proximity to publishers, as well as to many of our artist members. Our hopes for a new Opera Center included a larger and better-equipped space in which we can showcase new works. OPERA America is a funder, but we are also a national service organization, which gives us the ability to infuse the national discussion about opera with a more focused discussion about creation. We can multiply the benefit of our grants in the way that other funders can't.”



Laura Whalen in the title role of Calgary Opera's world premiere production of Estacio's *Filumena*. Photo by Trudie Lee and courtesy of Calgary Opera.



William Ferguson as Jason LaBelle in Opera Omaha's production of Davis's *Wakonda's Dream*. Photo by Jum Scholz.



Leslie Remmrt Soich in the title role of Opera Colorado's world premiere production of Rodriguez's *La Carandera*.
Photo by P. Switzer.



The Mississippi Opera Association's production of Telson's *The Gospel at Calvary*. Photo by T.C. Perkins.



James Maddalena in Lyric Opera of Kansas City's production of Mechem's *John Brown*. Photo by Douglas Hamer.

“ARTISTS ARE OUR COMPANY’S PRIMARY ASSET.”

We can't live without extremes in any field. The creative work that happens in the far reaches of the music-theater field, over time, ends up influencing what we see on stage in the opera house. It is a living art form.

For Music-Theatre Group, our way of producing has always put the artist first. It does not surprise me that sometimes people have heard of an artist or a work, but have no idea that MTG is behind the commission. Our attention is on the artist. This doesn't mean the producer isn't in control of the process. It's very important that the producer be an active part of the team.

One of the most important things to do early on in the developmental process is to learn how to describe the work, in all of its dimensions. The creative process reveals a lot about the artists' intent and that, in turn, informs how one speaks about the work. Whether you're creating an insurance policy or a piece of theater, you must carefully prepare the market for the new — how it's designed, how people will experience it.

I'm looking for composers and writers who are excited by the possibility of being involved in the whole process of developing the work before it's introduced on a big scale. The time we take might seem luxurious — or even excessive — to some. But we mean to give everyone the opportunity to fully experience the work

at every stage in its transition from the page to the final rehearsals.

Artists are our company's primary asset. What is important is to share their skills and talents with the public, the next generation of artists, leaders, the wider world. With an artist-driven company, it is a natural step to ask those artists to function as ambassadors and teachers. In this field, person-to-person exchange is a key ingredient. There is simply no substitute for the real-time practical engagement of working artists passing on their knowledge to others. It is the public's window into the soul of their craft and art.

I think producers of music-theater and opera have to develop a meaningful dialogue. We need to acknowledge our respective strengths and look for synergies. No one can afford to work in isolation. If we are to succeed in growing the repertoire, we need to take risks on new artists, look at the companies of all different kinds and sizes as part of a complex ecosystem and begin devising ways to combine forces and collaborate in order to generate new work.

***Diane Wondisford**, producing director of Music-Theatre Group, is a vice chairman of OPERA America. She led the organization's Artistic Services Committee during the development of The Opera Fund.*

Dedicated to New Work

Over the past 40 years, the number of American works produced on the lyric stage has dramatically increased. Not only have established opera companies showed a greater interest in art of our time, newer companies have been created for the sole purpose of developing and producing new and North American work. **Music-Theatre Group**, established in 1971, is almost an exact contemporary of OPERA America. Other member companies with a new works focus quickly followed: **Encompass New Opera Theatre** (1975), **Center for Contemporary Opera** (1982), **Musical**

Traditions, Inc. (1984), **American Opera Projects** (1988), **Nautilus Music-Theater** (1992, formerly the New Music-Theater Ensemble of The Minnesota Opera), **Long Leaf Opera** (1998) and **American Lyric Theatre** (2005); and in Canada: **Tapestry New Opera Works** (1979), **Soundstreams** (1982), **Chants Libres** (1990), **La Nef** (1991) and **The Queen of Puddings Music Theatre Company** (1995).

While these companies share an interest in new work, each serves the field in a slightly different way.



Boston Lyric Opera's production of Glass's *Akhnaten*. Photo by Richard Feldman.

“ I have a very big place in my heart for contemporary opera. These are pieces that people connect to in a different way. For me, it's more immediate than singing in somebody else's language. One of the joys of my career has been the combination of the old and the new. One informs the other. I'm not a predictor of doom and gloom. The emphasis on the theatrical is to my taste, and to the audience's taste, too. It's about imagination. It doesn't necessarily take money. Sometimes throwing money at a show is the worst solution. I just love low-tech theater. You don't have to have crashing chandeliers to keep the audience engaged. ”

Baritone **Robert Orth** has created roles in a number of operas, including Frank Lloyd Wright in *Shining Brow*, the title role in *Harvey Milk*, Owen Hart in *Dead Man Walking*, Uncle John in *The Grapes of Wrath* and Albert Godby in *Brief Encounter*. He appeared in the first season of OPERA America's *Salon Series*, performing excerpts from *Shining Brow* with composer Daron Hagen at the piano.

Readings, workshops and performances of works-in-progress are a common feature. In some cases, these works go on to receive larger-scale productions at more traditional opera companies. Examples include Tan Dun's *Marco Polo*, developed by Music-Theatre Group and given its American premiere at New York City Opera; Stephen Schwartz's *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*, developed by American Opera Projects for Opera Santa Barbara; and *The Golden Ticket* (Peter Ash/Donald Sturrock), commissioned by American Lyric Theater and slated for premiere at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2010.

In addition to supporting composers in the development of new work, many of these companies offer additional educational opportunities for artists. The Wesley Balk Opera/Music-Theater Institute, a program of Nautilus Music-Theater, works with performers to build upon the basic skills of singing, acting and moving to create integrated performances. At American Opera Projects, soprano Lauren Flanigan leads workshops on "Creating the Dramatic Character for Opera." Music-Theatre Group recently introduced a series of master classes for performers and producers.

A FUNDER'S PERSPECTIVE

“Although creating new opera is financially challenging even in the best of times, I am encouraged that companies continue to consider the creation and continued revitalization of the art form as central to their missions even in the current environment,” says Susan Feder, performing arts program officer for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. “A wide range of compositional styles are being embraced, from John Adams and Philip Glass, to Tobias Picker, Paul Moravec and Jake Heggie, to Charles Wuorinen or the late Hugo Weisgall, to Tod Machover and Tan Dun. Composers whose works celebrate the tradition, the grand lyrical sweep of the form naturally tend to predominate in the commissioning of new work, but there has been a fair amount of room for experimentation as well.”

The Mellon Foundation supports institutions that contribute to the development and preservation of their art form, and the expansion of the repertoire is seen as an important part of the equation. Its grants to opera companies (which are by invitation only) typically support multi-year explorations of new or rarely performed repertoire. Chicago Opera Theater recently received \$500,000 in support of a cycle of three contemporary and three Baroque operas; Opera Theatre of Saint Louis received \$1 million toward a three-year initiative that will include the world premiere of *The Golden Ticket* (Peter Ash/Donald Sturrock), a long-awaited revival of *The Death of Klinghoffer* (John Adams/Alice Goodman) and an unnamed world premiere commission for 2012. With grants to the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Foundation has also supported opera broadcasts. The Foundation, whose long-time support of OPERA America has included a \$2.2 million challenge grant to *The Opera Fund*, has made a significant investment in the work of selected service organizations because, says Feder, “they provide essential information services and leadership training and do work closely related to our program goals but are able to extend their reach to a larger group of institutions than we can with our direct grants.”

Recently, the Foundation has been exploring other interventions to serve the creation and development of new work. These initiatives are shaped in part by the Foundation’s study of activity across the performing arts: “For example, the opera world, unlike the theater world, does not have a very well established system of workshoping a new piece. Theater has the opposite situation — playwrights complain about being

workshopped to death. But in opera, schedules for premieres that are fixed at the time of commission mean that there is seldom time built into the creation process to identify and adjust crucial elements of dramaturgy, pacing, balance, etc. While plays can be read off scripts, in opera, you need vocal scores, choral and orchestral parts — the initial investment in creating these is enormous and the costs associated with revision can be prohibitive. In theater you also will see long-term commitments to a playwright or group of playwrights. Composers only rarely have that opportunity with opera companies; Houston Grand Opera with composers such as Carlisle Floyd, Mark Adamo, Daniel Catán; Lyric Opera of Chicago with William Bolcom; or Minnesota Opera with Dominick Argento being notable exceptions.”

A recent grant to Seattle Opera — the first of its kind — seeks to provide incentive for companies to produce an opera following its premiere by covering some of the costs associated with subsequent productions of *Amelia* (Daron Hagen/Gardner McFall), which will debut in Seattle in 2010. The grant will underwrite rental and royalty expenses for two subsequent productions, as well as any required revisions to the score and libretto. In addition, it will support audience development activities.

“There is enormous pressure on a composer to get it right the first time out,” says Feder. “Opera premieres are high profile events and there is seldom enough rehearsal time, particularly with full orchestral forces. Some, but too few, manage to succeed and enter the repertory. *Little Women* was Mark Adamo’s first opera, and he hit a grand slam. Osvaldo Golijov’s *Ainadamar* was a co-commission that benefited from being developed at Tanglewood and revised before subsequent productions. But the stakes are awfully high, and in an economic downturn, it is not surprising that certain companies have become risk-averse. We want to explore whether we can move the needle to enable more successful launching of new works by helping with the development process and encouraging second and third productions of new operas.”

Susan Feder is program officer for the performing arts at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which has provided significant support for The Opera Fund, as well as for new works activity at many OPERA America member companies. Previously, as vice president of G. Schirmer, Inc., she spent 20 years developing the careers of many leading composers in the United States, Europe and the former Soviet Union.



Victor Ledbetter as Mr. Maguire and Patricia Racette as the title role in The Santa Fe Opera's production of Picker's *Emmeline*. Photo by David Stein.


A Remarkable Partner

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has been an important partner in OPERA America's efforts to promote the expansion and growth of the art form. Since 1967, the NEA has made more than 4,300 grants to opera companies, artists and organizations, totaling almost \$165 million. Through its New American Works program, which ran from 1980 to 1995, the NEA awarded more than 600 grants to assist in the creation of new compositions, including *Nixon in China*, *Amistad* and *A View from the Bridge*.

"From its earliest days, the Arts Endowment has invested in the opera field in a variety of ways. By so doing, the arts and culture of our nation have been enriched," says Wayne S. Brown, director of music and opera for the NEA. "One of the recipients of this year's National Opera Honors is composer John Adams. His first opera, *Nixon in China*, is a perfect example of an artistic message

that also captures a significant moment in American history. Carlisle Floyd, who was honored last year, gave us another way of seeing America with his first opera, *Susannah*. When I think of some of the other American operas that have been created — *Dr. Atomic*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Crucible* — there are so many incredible connections, so many ways of reflecting on our history and doing so through the multi-dimensional art form that is opera."

The NEA launched OPERA America's *The Opera Fund* in 2002, underwriting 50 grants over three years totalling nearly \$1 million. "OPERA America, since its inception, has been a remarkable partner in allowing the opera field to benefit from the commission and premieres of various works," says Brown. "From our point of view there could not be a better example of an effective partnership."



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NORTH AMERICAN WORKS DIRECTORY

For many years, lack of information about American operas was one barrier for producers. When Julius Rudel set out to program his legendary “American Seasons” at New York City Opera, remembers his first task was to obtain and look through some 200 scores: “some still handwritten, and in poor handwriting, I might say.”

OPERA America has created a number of publications over the years designed to inform producers and other opera stakeholders about creative activity in North America. *In the Works*, a digest of recent premieres and works in progress, was launched in conjunction with *Opera for a New America*. When *The Next Stage* began to fund subsequent productions of American works, *Encore* disseminated information about North American works that had languished after their first productions.

OPERA America has been working with its publisher members to build on the data collected for these two publications to create a searchable, multimedia database, accessible through www.operaamerica.org. The **North American Works Directory** contains information on operas and music-theater works reaching back to 1895. Information includes title, composer, librettist, length, synopsis, character break-downs, premiere date and venue, original cast, list of recordings and reviews, source material, chorus requirements and orchestration, as well as contact information of the publisher, agent, producer or composer. The directory also supports videos, audio clips and photographs.

Additional Features


- A *timeline of North American works* displays operas in the directory by their premiere date.

- An *A-Z index* allows users to easily sort through the catalog of nearly 1,000 North American operas. The list can be sorted by work title, composer, librettist and original producer.
- The operas in the directory are linked to the Schedule of Performances so that productions by member companies are posted with the work’s information. *Upcoming performances of North American works* as well as the *10 most-produced North American works* are listed on the main Directory Web page.
- Selected directory listings are also linked to OPERA America’s *Opera Fund* and Opera.ca’s *Canadian Opera Creation Fund* grant programs. These funds have awarded nearly \$2.7 million since their inception in 2002, and over 100 projects have received grant awards, which are highlighted within the North American Works Directory.

Submitting Works to the North American Works Directory

Eligible works are those written by a composer and/or librettist who is a citizen or permanent resident of North America. The work must also have been workshopped, published or produced by an OPERA America member. Producers and creators of new work can fill out a simple online form to have their works included.

Score Library

The Baisley Powell Elebash Score Library, located in OPERA America’s New York City office, houses scores that correspond to some of the works on the North American Works Directory; members may browse the scores by appointment. OPERA America gladly accepts donations of scores and recordings corresponding to works in the Directory. For more information, contact EAntopol@operaamerica.org. 

The North American Works Directory is one of a growing number of online resources devoted to new and North American opera. Podcasts of *Making Connections*, a professional development and networking series held at OPERA America’s New York Office, include the topics How Companies Commission Opera, New Works Opportunities with Music Schools and Workshopping Your Opera. The Archive also includes articles on *Pathways to a Premiere*, *Tips for Composers and Librettists*, *Singers and North American Repertoire*, *The Role of the Dramaturg in the Creation of New Work* and *Refreshing the Repertory*.



NEA Opera Honors

On November 14, 2009, OPERA America marked the beginning of National Opera Week by joining with the National Endowment for the Arts to celebrate the recipients of the 2009 NEA Opera Honors: John Adams, Frank Corsaro, Marilyn Horne, Lotfi Mansouri and Julius Rudel. This award represents the greatest honor our nation bestows in opera. Video tributes to the honorees may be viewed at www.arts.gov.



From left: Lotfi Mansouri, Julius Rudel, Marilyn Horne, Frank Corsaro and John Adams • Bryan Stokes Mitchell and Denyce Graves • Angela Brown and Gordon Hawkins • Chris Pedro Trakas • Barbara Cook. All photos by Henry Grossman.

OPERA CONFERENCE 2010: NEW REALITIES | NEW STRATEGIES

As we move beyond the initial shock of the financial crisis, administrators, trustees and artists now face a new set of challenges as they navigate through an altered economic landscape, what many are describing as a “new normal.” Questions abound as to how we continue to produce opera, attract audiences and secure contributions. How do we adjust to new funding and investment realities in our business models? What opportunities will new technology provide? What needs to change to ensure success? The field must remain vibrant and nimble to adapt to the present day. *Opera Conference 2010: New Realities | New Strategies* will engage all opera stakeholders in answering these questions and attaining their goals in a time of changing social, cultural and financial dynamics.

This is a conference that you cannot afford to miss, and OPERA America has taken action to make sure it's affordable for your organization:

- Three conference hotels in downtown Los Angeles, with rooms starting at just \$85 per night
- Airfare discounts of 10 percent off the lowest available rate from American Airlines, the official airline of *Opera Conference 2010*
- Reduced prices for pre-conference seminars (\$95) and network dinners (\$35)
- Individual registration frozen for the fourth consecutive year at \$495
- **And new for 2010!** Register two or more attendees from your organization and receive free tickets to Network Dinners, Conference Seminars and the Anniversary Dinner. This is a limited-time offer, so register today.

Seminars

Formal conference programming has always been preceded by half-day and full-day seminars. This year, through the support of the Mellon Foundation, pre- and post-conference webinars will enhance these conference seminars. On Wednesday, June 9, 2010, conference seminars at the OMNI Hotel will focus on governance, emerging leadership, e-marketing and fundraising. Additionally, LA Opera will be hosting a seminar on the *Ring Cycle* at the Huntington Library.

Leadership Advance

Advancing the opera field depends on the identification and development of new leaders who have the talent, experience

and desire to master the complexities of opera company management. This conference-long seminar series will provide those eager to advance to leadership positions in the field with specific advice in key management areas, as well as guidance on how to build skills and find appropriate mentors. Participants will gain expertise through presentations and group discussions, including breakfasts each day of the conference. Topics will include: staff management, major donor cultivation and stewardship, integration of electronic media in marketing and communication strategies, public speaking and meeting facilitation, among others. Faculty for each segment of the seminar will include opera company general directors and field leaders in the areas of development, marketing and governance.

Revolution in the Board Room

Good governance is always important, but harder economic times place an even higher premium on the service of board members who understand and fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Led by governance expert and author Kay Sprinkel Grace, this seminar is designed for general directors, development directors and trustees who appreciate that a healthy opera company starts with effective communication and collaboration among company leaders. Areas for discussion will include systematic board recruitment, developing outstanding board members, improving board meetings, designing a productive and engaging committee structure, and strengthening the board's role in fundraising.

Soliciting New and Increased Annual Gifts

Development strategies and programs are more important than ever for ensuring resources to achieve artistic excellence. Over the past decade, earned income from ticket sales has covered significantly less of annual expenses, and the challenge has been exacerbated by the decline in subscriptions. At a time of greater dependence on development income, demands on development directors are increasing in the context of a climate of layoffs and reduced budget resources.

Making an Impact with Social Media and Technology

Today's world is teeming with tools to reach and engage patrons, such as mobile applications, online advertisements, Twitter and other social media. However, choosing which opportunities are right for your organization, integrating them into your traditional marketing efforts and measuring the return on investment can be challenging. In this day-long

session, we will analyze the different mediums, evaluate the required investment and discuss avenues to success.

Ring Seminar

LA Opera will host a seminar on Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at the Huntington Library. The seminar will commence at 10:00 a.m., with registration at 9:30 a.m., and will conclude at 4:00 p.m. Presenting along with other scholars from the field will be Dr. Mitchell Morris, associate professor of musicology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Admission to the seminar will include lunch and access to the Library's gardens and galleries.

General Sessions

General Sessions serve as a conference-wide platform for attendees to assess and meet the challenges facing the entire opera community today. This year's marquee lineup of General Session speakers includes **Plácido Domingo**, **James Conlon**, **Achim Freyer** and **Eli Broad**, among others.

Opening Session

The conference kicks off with opening remarks by LA Opera Chairman **Marc Stern**, OPERA America Chairman **Anthony Freud** and OPERA America President and CEO **Marc A. Scorca**.

Banking on the Private Purse

The economic landscape is shifting dramatically as recovery begins to replace recession. Will new economic challenges, like inflation, start to exert pressure on our opera companies? Or will the recovery be sustainable and effect positive change? How will these outside forces influence individual, corporate and foundation giving? Wells Fargo's chief economist, **Dr. John Silvia**, will lead a discussion on these very questions and provide the latest analysis of economic trends and their impact on donors and consumers.

The New and Unusual: Is it Opera?

Opera is thriving — in bars, subways and even swimming pools. New ensembles, many of them led by energetic and entrepreneurial artists, are springing up around the country performing new and unusual works with unconventional productions in outlandish venues. Established opera companies, too, are leaving the opera house to perform a variety of works in different locations to serve broader audiences. Creativity abounds, but is it opera? Do labels matter? Hosted by LA Opera Music Director **James Conlon**, and moderated by **David Kasunic**, professor of musicology at Occidental College, leading producers and artists will discuss a subject that is never without controversy, and suggest how you can play a role in defining the art form.

Remodeling the Opera Company Business Model

Many opera houses learned the hard way that a balanced budget is no longer enough; the need for capital reserves is

pressing and the industry is struggling to meet that need. The obstacles exist on all sides of the equation: fewer subscribers, rapidly diminishing corporate funding and looming legislation that could hurt prospects for charitable donations. Regardless of the size of your budget and capital needs, we'll examine where to turn for new revenue sources and how to revamp your business model to operate more effectively. The panel will look at some untapped resources, and also offer an inside view of one business model that is succeeding right now.

In Conversation: Plácido Domingo

OPERA America President and CEO Marc A. Scorca will interview and take questions for the renowned tenor as Domingo looks back at 40 years of opera in America and where he sees the field in the next 40 years.

In Conversation: Achim Freyer

Yuval Sharon, assistant director for the LA *Ring*, will interview and take questions for the critically acclaimed director, set designer and costume designer Achim Freyer.

Closing Address

Remarks by **Eli Broad**, KBHome and SunAmerica founder and prominent arts philanthropist, conclude the conference.

Open Sessions

Open Sessions offer expert advice and methods for mastering specific issues relating to the various professional specialties within the field of opera, such as education, marketing, development, artistic, technical and production, finance and governance. Current plans for open sessions include:

- Rethinking Spectacle: Opera as Storytelling
- Streamlining the Audition Process
- Forging Beyond the Premiere
- Training the Next Generation of Technicians and Production Administrators
- New Tech, New Safety Issues
- Tailoring Co-Productions to Fit Your Company
- The Major Gifts Trio: Board President, General Director, Development Director
- Online Fundraising
- Increasing Support from Subscribers, Ticket Buyers and Current Donors
- Innovation in Assessing and Evaluating Education Programs
- Maximizing Education Resources in Your Community
- Education and Marketing Department Rapport
- Relating to Unrelated Business Income Tax: How to Generate New Revenue
- Mergers and Acquisitions, Strategic Cooperatives and Other Opportunities for Expansion
- Managing the Multigenerational Workforce
- Using OPERA America Benchmarking Analyses to Identify Best Practices

- Helping to Shape Public Policies in Support of the Arts
- Making Your Pitch in a Changing Media Landscape
- Turning Research Data into Marketing Gold

New for 2010: Propose a Roundtable

Roundtable Sessions provide a safe space to have a productive discussion with peers in a given network and/or budget level. OPERA America invites Professional, Associate and Educational Affiliate members to submit proposals for hour-long roundtable sessions. Ideas should relate to this year's conference theme, **New Realities | New Strategies**, or last year's conference theme, **Making Opera Matter**. Applications and instructions may be found at www.operaamerica.org.

Performances

• The Ring Cycle – June 8 through June 16

Opera Conference 2010 marks the first annual conference ever to be held in conjunction with an entire *Ring Cycle*. Critics are already raving about **LA Opera's** first-ever production of *The Ring*, designed and directed by the visionary artist Achim Freyer and under the musical leadership of James Conlon, an acclaimed exponent of Wagnerian repertoire.

- *Das Rheingold*: Tuesday, June 8, 2010
- *Die Walküre*: Thursday, June 10, 2010
- *Siegfried*: Sunday, June 13, 2010
- *Götterdämmerung*: Wednesday, June 16, 2010

• Ricky Ian Gordon's *Orpheus and Euridice* – Saturday June 9 at 9:00 p.m.

Conference attendees will travel by coach bus to Long Beach for dinner on the water, followed by **Long Beach Opera's** "notorious opera in a swimming pool." Elizabeth Futral's and Grammy-nominated clarinetist Todd Palmer's performances transform the Belmont Plaza Olympic Pool into the River Styx for one of the most innovative productions you will ever witness.

Special Events

• Co-Production Speed Dating – Friday, June 11 at 2:15 p.m.

Across North America, rental stock of the standard repertory is aging, highlighting the need for new and renewed co-production relationships across the field. By refreshing our production assets, OPERA America returns to the purpose for which it was founded in 1970 — to facilitate co-production among members.


At this *Opera Conference 2010* event, Professional Company Member representatives will court potential co-producers. Six operas carefully selected from the standard repertory will be assigned segments during which potential producers

will discuss the possibility of working together to create exciting new productions of these works.

• New Works Sampler – Friday, June 11 at 4:30 p.m.

Esteemed members of LA Opera's Domingo-Thornton Young Artist Program will present excerpts from recently premiered and soon-to-premiere North American operas at this always-popular *Opera Conference* event.

• Anniversary Dinner – Friday, June 11 at 7:00 p.m.

Join friends and colleagues atop the City Club on Bunker Hill to celebrate OPERA America's 40th anniversary and Marc A. Scorca's 20th anniversary as president and CEO of the organization. 

Come next July, this is the conference that EVERYONE will be talking about!
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CREATIVE CONNECTIONS WITH OPERA.CA

BY TIM CHRISTISON

Practice and theory from a variety of perspectives converged in Banff, Canada during August 2009. Creative Connections, a new initiative by Opera.ca in collaboration with the Banff Centre, brought the creative teams from five opera companies to Banff to advance five very different works-in-progress.

Opera Ontario has commissioned an historical opera based on the life of aboriginal leader Joseph Brant, by composer Tomas Dusatko and librettist Elizabeth Hill. **Tapestry New Opera Works** brought *The Enslavement and Liberation of Oksana G.* (Aaron Gervais/Colleen Murphy), which explores society's underbelly and speaks in many languages. **Calgary Opera's** *The Untimely Death of Whatsisname* (Allan Gilliland/Val Brandt) catches a wrestler in his last days. **Pacific Opera Victoria** *Mary's Wedding* requires author Stephen Massicotte to transform his two-character play into a libretto with three characters and a chorus in collaboration with composer Andrew Paul Macdonald. **Vancouver Opera's** multi-lingual *Lillian Alling* (John Estacio/John Murrell) is based on a true story of the northwest, but the title character's motivations are purely the inventions of the librettist.

With funding from the Canadian Metcalf Foundation, composers and librettists enjoyed all the facilities of the Banff Centre, including a separate studio in the woods for each team in which to write and/or compose. Creative teams had access to a pool of actors and singers to give voice to their works, as well as assistance from four respected mentors: John Murrell, Canada's most produced playwright who has written four opera librettos; John Estacio, who is working on his third opera with Murrell, *Lillian Alling*; Kelly Robinson, opera director, dramaturg and director of Theatre Arts at the Banff Centre; and Jonathan Dove, a prolific composer for television, as well as the stage.

Robinson's workshop process begins with a cold reading of the libretto by actors. He said, "Most of all I think it helps the composer to say, 'Aha, I think that line is filled with irony, or that line is mocking the character. Let's decide before I put my ideas into music and then discover that in fact that pitch or intensity is not actually what is best.'"

Performers' differing work habits quickly made themselves apparent. Opera singers, who are typically expected to arrive "off-book" for first rehearsals, were less comfortable with constantly changing scores. The actors revelled in cold readings

of a constant stream of new material, but the singers' desire to deliver perfect performances meant a bumpy ride at the beginning of the week.

The singers' versatility was challenged in each workshop as they encountered a variety of characters from pimps to virgin brides and musical styles from classical to soul. They were required to sing in Ukrainian, Russian, Greek and English, sometimes all in the same score.

The week of workshops preceded the two-day Banff Centre Opera Colloquium, which brought together a variety of opera professionals to discuss their intention as producers of opera and their relationship with new opera. About a quarter of the over 50 delegates at the Opera Colloquium had participated in the Creative Connections workshops. Experiences and observations from the workshops and past productions peppered all conversations.

Jonathan Dove's keynote speech disclosed the specific circumstances and situations that have allowed him to compose 23 operas and mini-operas. Dove explained his prodigious output was sparked by the trust placed in him and fuelled by his determination to deliver in his own voice plus the willingness of producers to entertain his unorthodox approach of taking opera to the people in malls and transit stations.

When asked how he handled comments from others but still maintained his artistic integrity, Dove said, "If it hurt, I knew it was true and something I was already aware of but had maybe been too busy or too lazy to change. But otherwise I would fight to maintain my work as I had presented it."

In challenging the colloquium participants to advance the cause of Canadian opera creation, Robinson asked, "What manifesto can we create and agree to as our commitment to new works and getting them beyond the first production?"

Marc A. Scorca, OPERA America's president and CEO, reported on the service organization's experience with funding new opera over the past two decades, and James Wright, chair of Opera.ca, outlined the newer *Canadian Opera Creation Fund (COCF)*. The purpose of the \$1.6 million in funding for Canadian opera had been to increase the quantity, quality and creativity of Canadian opera, as well as to increase the number of companies involved in new works.

Since its inception, the COCF has funded 46 projects, 22 of which have been produced. Few of the 22 have had second productions, however. The group discussed the skills needed to make new opera and how companies can nurture these skills.

In addition to exploring the path to a successful premiere, participants addressed the challenges to subsequent productions. In general, companies find it easier to get media coverage and funding for a premiere than for a second mounting of a new work. Calgary Opera's *Filumena* was produced four times — an outstanding success for a new work in Canada. It was successful in telling stories that resonated with both audiences and local funders.

How do we define success or failure? This question generated a lively discussion. Indicators included ticket sales, critical reviews and the buzz in the hall.

For some companies, participation in the creative process is the main goal. For example, even though *Mary's Wedding* is based on a widely produced play, Artistic Director Timothy Vernon has not slotted it into a Pacific Opera Victoria season. He says, "POV works on two or three operas a season. There is always

two or three years of work before opening night. It may happen that the work takes place and learning takes place but there is no opening night. It's set up that way to allow flexibility."

Calgary Opera's Bob McPhee has built support for the company's new works endeavors, but the process has taken time. "Our company has been doing a new work or a Canadian premiere every January for 10 years. We had to build through the whole organization the belief that new work is required. This re-positioned the company in people's minds and made it huge with corporate, community and media. It's up to leadership to promote the value of new works and encourage buy-in by everyone."

Over the course of the weekend, delegates talked openly and honestly, confirming that the commitment to new creation is alive and well, even if circumstances (particularly financial circumstances) have changed. Opera.ca will continue to sharpen a statement about the Canadian opera community's new works aspirations through the work of a special committee who will also be charged with overseeing the future directions of the Canadian Opera Creation Fund. 📄



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Opera: The Great Composers and their Masterworks

Joyce Bourne
Mitchell Beazley
ISBN13: 9781845332754

This volume delves into the background to 400 years of opera: the composers, the singers and the buildings and festivals that have developed to showcase them. The development of opera is explored in this work and set in its political and social context. At the heart of this book are concise biographies of major composers, accompanied by portraits and illustrations relating to their works, together with recommended recordings, both historical and contemporary.

**Who Married Figaro?:
A Book of Opera Characters**
Joyce Bourne
Oxford University Press
ISBN: 0199548196

Previously titled *Who's Who in Opera*, this new edition has been revised and fully updated, with a new appendix of contemporary operas of the last 10 years, including detailed synopses and world premiere cast lists, plus a list of opera-related Web links. The book remains a goldmine of information on opera characters, ranging from brief identifications of minor characters to multi-page essays of major figures. The volume boasts more than two dozen feature articles on major characters such as Brünnhilde and Violetta, written by well-known personalities who themselves constitute a who's who of opera. Readers will find Plácido Domingo writing on the character of Otello, Bryn Terfel on Leporello, Janet Baker on Mary

Stuart, Thomas Hampson on Posa and Theodore Uppman on Billy Budd. Other contributors include Andrew Porter, Sena Jurinac, Philip Langridge, Jonathan Miller, Sir Charles MacKerras and Marie McLaughlin. New to this edition are articles by America opera stars Christine Brewer and Joyce DiDonato. Taken together, these articles reveal much about the creative process behind some of the most famous performances in opera history.

**Changing the Score:
Arias, Prima Donnas, and the Authority of Performance**
Hilary Poriss
Oxford University Press
ISBN: 019538671X

In this volume, Hilary Poriss explores the role and significance of aria insertion, the practice that allowed singers to introduce music of their own choice into productions of Italian operas. Each chapter investigates the art of aria insertion during the 19th century from varying perspectives, beginning with an overview of the changing fortunes of the practice, followed by explorations of individual prima donnas and their relationship with particular insertion arias: Carolina Ungher's difficulties in finding a "perfect" aria to introduce into Donizetti's *Marino Faliero*; Guiditta Pasta's performance of an aria from Pacini's *Niobe* in a variety of operas, and the subsequent fortunes of that particular aria; Maria Malibran's interpolation of Vaccai's final scene from *Giulietta e Romeo* in place of Bellini's original setting in his *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*; and Adelina Patti's "mini-concerts" in the lesson scene of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. This book covers

a wide variety of material that will be of interest to opera scholars and opera lovers alike, touching on the fluidity of the operatic work, the reception of the singers and the shifting and hardening aesthetics of music criticism through the period. Poriss is Assistant Professor of Music at Northeastern University.

Fate! Luck! Chance!: Amy Tan, Stewart Wallace, and the Making of *The Bonesetter's Daughter* Opera
Ken Smith
Chronicle Books
ISBN: 081186605X

Serendipity and innovative collaboration turned *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, Amy Tan's best-selling novel, into a pioneering opera, which debuted in 2008 at San Francisco Opera before touring the world. In their own words, captured by Ken Smith, Amy Tan and composer Stewart Wallace describe an incredible journey that took them to China, where local village traditions, as well as singers, musicians and designers became an integral part of the creative process. This book includes the complete libretto for the opera, written by Amy Tan. Ken Smith is a Hong Kong-based journalist whose writing has appeared in the *Financial Times* and *Gramophone*, among other publications.

**Performing Arts Management:
A Handbook of Professional Practices**
Tobie S. Stein and Jessica Bathurst
Allworth Press
ISBN: 1581156502

This comprehensive volume is packed with the wisdom and expertise of more than 150 nonprofit and commercial performing arts professionals who

share their winning strategies for the performing arts workplace, from theater to classical music, opera to dance. Uncover the realities of running a performing arts organization today, as the authors offer extensive, in-depth information on a variety of topics. Featured performing arts organizations include the Kennedy Center, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Lincoln Center Festival, the Mark Morris Dance Group, The Minnesota Opera and many more. Their practical tips and insider hints are illustrated by figures and appendices of sample organizational structures, job descriptions, business models, letters, income statements, operating budgets and much more. Each chapter also highlights classroom discussion questions and contains a detailed resource list, including Web sites.

Why Don't Students Like School?: A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom

Daniel T. Willingham
 Wiley
 ISBN: 9780470279304

Kids are naturally curious, but when it comes to school it seems like their minds are turned off. Why is it that they can remember the smallest details from their favorite television program, yet miss the most obvious questions on their history test? Cognitive scientist Daniel T. Willingham has focused his research on the biological and cognitive basis of learning and has an understanding of the daily challenges faced by classroom teachers. This book will help teachers improve their practice by explaining how they and their students think and learn, revealing the importance of story, emotion, memory, context and routine in building knowledge and creating lasting learning experiences. Willingham is professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, where he has taught since 1992. He writes the "Ask the Cognitive Scientist" column for *American Educator* magazine.

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- Join NATS now and get conference registration discounts! The 51st National Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah; July 2-6, 2010. Featured guest artist is Kristen Chenoweth.

Contact Susan Grizzard, Membership Services Coordinator, at susan@nats.org or 904-992-9101 to join today! The complete membership application and information can be found online at www.nats.org by selecting the membership tab.

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