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WINTER 2013

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ON THE COVER:

To promote the diverse talents of emerging American theater artists, *Opera America Magazine* has commissioned scenic designers from the winning teams of the 2013 Robert L.B. Tobin *Director-Designer Showcase* to create original cover designs. This issue's cover is by Patrick Rizzotti, who participated in the team that presented a proposed production of *Elmer Gantry* at *Opera Conference 2013*. Additional *Elmer Gantry* team members included Stephanie Havey, director; Megan Spatz, costume designer; and Brandon Mitchell, lighting designer.

"The design is a celebration of the creativity, innovation and risk-taking in current day American opera," says Rizzotti. "The flag is composed of a series of carefully selected iconic images, pulled from operas involving politics, pop culture and new works, each manipulated to create a rhythm or texture. When viewed alone, the individual images are meant to be simple representation of a specific opera, but the true beauty comes from the understanding that each image is only a small part of a larger, nationwide movement; a movement discussed in the three main articles of this issue."

Rizzotti's portfolio and resume can be viewed at patrickrizzotti.com

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CITY OPERA: LOSS AND LEGACY



The closure of New York City Opera this fall led to deep reflection about the state of the art form and the field. I spent a great deal of time in October fielding questions from the opera community and from journalists across the country and internationally, the primary one being: Is City Opera's fate a harbinger of crises to come for other companies?

Such questions often accompany the demise of an established cultural institution, but the closure of New York City Opera is a story about one company that succumbed to a unique set of circumstances. Indeed, New York City Opera's closure is, in part, a reflection of its success: it inspired developments across the entire field, which became increasingly dedicated to the same core values, ultimately eroding the company's distinctive position.

New York City Opera's first decades were marked by revolutionary seasons that featured works never performed by The Met — until The Met began to diversify its programming and style of production. Works by Handel, and by American and other contemporary composers, on the stage of The Met and at other celebrated companies across the country further diminished City Opera's national and local identity.

American singers began to take center stage at The Met at about the same time. They would have been stars of the company in the old days of New York City Opera, carrying forward Beverly Sills' ability to galvanize audience loyalty. Other important companies, too, emerged as showcases for American singers, many of whom had been nurtured in local young artist programs.

Dozens of new, independent opera companies have blossomed over the last 10 years. Visit the website of the fledgling New York Opera Alliance, a consortium supported by OPERA America. From new works laboratories to neighborhood opera companies that offer performance opportunities for rising professionals and accomplished amateurs, opera in New York City (and by the same measure, in many other cities, too) is thriving. This infrastructure of companies provides new and veteran audiences with an alternative to the grand opera experience that is more alternative than City Opera could be its final years.

Venue challenges for City Opera began in the mid-1960s with the move from the cherished City Center to one of the several travertine buildings at Lincoln Center, the city's premier performing arts center. After 9/11, City Opera's quest for a smaller, acoustically better theater led to a much publicized debate about the faults of the New York State Theater — a debate that undermined efforts to attract and retain audiences.

Opera's inexorable cost escalation is a familiar topic, but for New York City Opera, the expenses associated with filling their weeks at Lincoln Center with over 100 performances of 15 operas each year became unsustainable. The challenges of fundraising were amplified by a rocky leadership transition and a dark season as the State Theater was improved physically and acoustically.

As the opera world changed, so did the world around us. When Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia endorsed the formation of New York City Opera in 1943, the city's working class population was dominated by European immigrants and their children for whom opera was a symbol of national pride. New Yorkers today are as musical as ever, but their music of choice is far more varied. Opera is no longer viewed as occupying a special place at the pinnacle of our cultural hierarchy, and the diminution of music education centered on the European canon only makes our jobs more challenging.

That the loss of City Opera can be analyzed and explained does not diminish the sadness we all feel around the closure of one of our most storied institutions. Every company can pay tribute to New York City Opera's legacy by finding a way to be the people's opera in the communities they serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc A. Scorca". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO

INNOVATIONS

OPERA AMERICA GOES TO WASHINGTON

On the first day of National Opera Week, members of OPERA America's board of directors journeyed to Capitol Hill to advocate with Congressional representatives on behalf of their companies and the opera field.

The day began with a briefing at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), attended by NEA leadership, including Joan Shigekawa, senior deputy chairman; Patrice Walker Powell, deputy chairman for programs and partnerships; Wayne Brown, director of music and opera director; and Sunil Ayengar, director of research and analysis. Members of the OPERA America board and Technical/Production Forum were joined by Frayda Lindemann, board chair of OPERA America and trustee of the **Metropolitan Opera**.

Afterwards, ten OPERA America members visited twelve House and Senate offices to speak about the impact of opera in their communities and to urge support for funding the NEA and the preservation of charitable giving incentives. While visiting the offices of lawmakers that included Representatives Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Roger Williams (R-TX) and Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL), Claire McCaskill (D-MO) and Bob Casey (D-PA), board members shared stories about the value of opera, the creation of new works, efforts to address critical issues in the community and opera's economic impact.

Senator Dianne Feinstein's staff reiterated the importance of opera companies developing relationships with local Congressional staff at district offices. Inviting them to performances and events will enhance their ability to convey companies' needs to legislators.

Members visiting the Washington, D.C., region wishing to meet with their Congressional representatives can contact OPERA America's director of government affairs, Brandon Gryde, at BGryde@operaamerica.org or 202.375.7523.

— Brandon Gryde



KNOXVILLE OPERA RECEIVES LARGEST GRANT IN ITS HISTORY



Knoxville Opera Board Chair Dr. Michelle Brewer, Aslan Foundation Executive Director Jeff Mansour and Knoxville Opera Executive Director/Conductor Brian Salesky at the media announcement of the grant. Photo courtesy of Knoxville Opera.

Knoxville Opera has received a \$750,000 grant from the Aslan Foundation to support three initiatives over the next five years. The multi-year gift is designed to bolster operating reserves, fund new productions and launch a new artist residency program.

“Knoxville Opera is an important part of our city’s cultural identity,” says Jeff Mansour, the Aslan Foundation’s executive director. “The Foundation’s Board of Directors hopes our support will help solidify an already well-run organization, allowing them to pursue even greater artistic achievements and build on their impressive community outreach efforts.” Founded in 1994 by attorney Lindsay Young, the Aslan Foundation is focused on “preserving and enhancing the natural beauty, assets and history of the Knoxville area, and enhancing quality of life in the region.”

“Knoxville Opera’s future certainly looks brighter thanks to the generosity, vision and confidence of the Aslan Foundation,” says Executive Director/Conductor Brian Salesky. “We celebrate the Aslan Foundation’s gift as a challenge for us to judiciously expand and increase the level of our artistic activities.” The family foundation has been a quiet but major benefactor of the company for several years, according to Salesky, but even after extended discussions with the foundation the size of the grant, particularly in proportion to the opera’s annual budget of \$1.2 million, came as a bit of a surprise.

One of the first concerns of board and staff was ensuring that current major donors did not see the gift as reducing Knoxville Opera’s continuing need for their support, as well. “We have reached out to every person, foundation and government agency that has given us money to thank them for providing the financial security on which the Aslan Foundation based their faith in us,” Salesky says, who notes that the opera has balanced its budget for nine straight years and carries no debt. “We have to keep up the development process every single day, celebrate this vote of confidence and talk to people in a way that gives them resurgent energy in supporting us.”

— Matthew Sigman

INNOVATIONS

ENHANCING OPERA FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED



Peter Stewart in the title role is joined by (left to right) Julie Wysokinska, Brianna Key and Isabella Ross-Rivera from The Filomen M. D'Agostino Greenberg Music School of Lighthouse International and the youth chorus from the Park Avenue Christian Church for a rehearsal of the joint Lighthouse International and Arts at The Park production of Britten's *Noye's Fludde*.

When the animals trotted two-by-two up the nave of New York City's Park Avenue United Methodist Church on November 15 and 16, you'd never know if one were blind. Which was precisely the point: produced by Lighthouse International's Filomen M. D'Agostino Greenburg Music School, the performance of Benjamin Britten's *Noye's Fludde* celebrated the accomplishments of performers whose artistry is often overshadowed by disability.

"They stand up a bit taller because they are not being looked at first as a blind person, but rather as musician," says the school's executive director, Leslie Jones. Designed by Britten to be performed by amateurs in a church, Jones saw it as an ideal work to highlight the capacities of the adults and children the school serves. To accommodate the special needs of performers, who could not use guide dogs or canes on the tiered platforms, required ingenuity in set design (carefully placed railings) and choreography. "We spent an enormous amount of time making sure people know where front is," says Jones. Still, per Britten's instructions, an ark was built on the altar.

More than half the cast of *Noye's Fludde* were visually impaired, among them mezzo-soprano Leslie Rubin, who sang the role of Noye's Wife. The production was directed by Sarah Meyers. Conductor Samuel Wong, who is also an ophthalmologist, led musicians from the Orchestra of Saint Luke's. Soprano June Anderson serves as an advisor to the school.

Jones says the biggest challenge in teaching blind musicians is access to materials. The school had the score for *Noye's Fludde* transcribed into Braille. "It's unfair to think that someone who is visually impaired or totally blind should simply learn music by ear," she says. "The point of our school is to make them musically literate so they can participate in the music community at large." Lydia Machell, whose U.K.-based Prima Vista Braille Music Services has pioneered technology for translating Braille music for instruction, libretti and supertitles, says that such tools are essential to both pedagogy and enjoyment of opera. "To not have that experience is to be excluded," she says.

On the other side of the proscenium, services for visually impaired operagoers have become an essential part of opera company patron services, often presented in partnership with local schools and agencies. Since 1997, **Utah Symphony | Utah Opera** has presented an annual dress rehearsal for the blind and visually impaired in collaboration with the Moran Eye Center and the Utah Council for the Blind. In addition to pre-opera talks, Braille and large-print programs, and audio descriptions, props and fabric samples of costumes are passed around. For **Lyric Opera of Kansas City** (LOKC), the Kansas State School for the Blind provides Braille translations of synopses and titles free of charge. LOKC Director of Patron Services Ken McClain notes that the company is careful to differentiate between customer service and access. "When it comes to physical assistance, that is the hall's responsibility. When it comes to ticket information, patron services and outreach, those are all the responsibilities of the opera."

At the Kennedy Center, home to **Washington National Opera** (WNO), Director of Accessibility Betty Siegel says opera patrons are the largest users of Braille and large-print programs, significantly more than the center's patrons for music and plays. Though the

incidence of visual impairment is often age-related in the general population, she does not see a correlation to WNO patron demand. "Opera is story-based and connects well with the blind and low vision community," says Siegel, who consults with a local advisory committee. The Kennedy Center's Braille programs are created in-house by volunteers.

The Kennedy Center also offers audio description services, and she says "the opera is way ahead of everybody else." Though in previous years, audio description was available only at select performances or by request, demand has grown such that WNO now offers audio descriptions at every performance. Describers, who are trained in-house and paid, are recruited by audition and chosen based on facility with language and a talent for transparency. "Actors are not always the best," she notes.

Mike Cohen has served as an audio describer for the Kennedy Center since 2005. For him, the process begins with attending tech and dress rehearsals, where he takes notes on staging, sets and costumes. A 10-minute pre-show audio program note is assembled, including advisories on smoke, firearm use or wind effects. Cohen says the ultimate goal is "to describe action without stepping on the actors or the music." At intermission, he races from the tech booth to the house to get feedback from users on his pacing and volume.

On the cutting edge, **San Francisco Opera** (SFO) offers "Live Titles," designed by SFO Audio Engineer Tod Nixon, which converts supertitles to speech in real time and delivers them to a wireless headset. The bone conduction devices are worn behind the ear so as not to interfere with the live performance. According to SFO Master Audio-Visual Engineer Doug Mitchell, SFO is currently testing a new service, "Live Titles Access," which will enable patrons to view titles on a tablet, with the ability to adjust font size and speed of titles to their needs.

Next on the horizon? A wireless digital signal that will deliver supertitles to laptop Braille readers, which provide a real-time refreshable keyboard.

— Matthew Sigman

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INNOVATIONS

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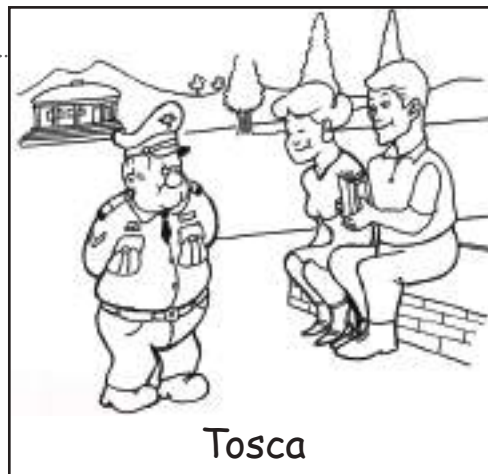
To celebrate National Opera Week 2013 and spark the interest of local children, **Wichita Grand Opera** (WGO) created a coloring book of scenes from productions it will present during its 2014 season. Conceptualized by WGO Artistic Director Margaret Pent, the book draws on the talents of local artist Jac Send, with story adaptations by Sam T. Jack, the coloring book consists of illustrations from *William Tell*, *Tosca* and *The Barber of Seville* and the ballets *Sleeping Beauty* and *Don Quixote*, along with child-friendly descriptions of the scenes depicted. The coloring book also contains a coupon good for 40% off tickets to one of these productions for the children and their adult companions.

WGO launched the program by distributing more than 1,000 copies to children during Sedgwick County Zoo's Night of the Living Zoo festivities in October. Seeing how eagerly the books were received, Pent was then inspired to distribute additional copies to local children and to create a coloring contest to further encourage the children's creativity. The coloring books have been given to music and art teachers at area public and private schools, as well as homeschooling organizations and other children's groups.

Through January 3, 2014, WGO will accept entries of completed coloring books, with an impressive array of prizes for competition winners. Entries will be judged by members of the WGO Guild and winners will be chosen in a variety of age categories. First, second and third place winners will be presented onstage prior to a February production of *William Tell* and will each receive a winner's ribbon, tickets to *The Barber of Seville*, have their artwork displayed in the performing arts center, receive a backstage tour and have the opportunity to appear onstage in WGO's production of *Tosca* in April. The prize package will also provide these budding artists with access to watch WGO's scenic artist paint the backdrops for an upcoming production. In each age division, first place winners will also receive an electronic tablet; second place winners will win an art supply kit and third place winners will be given a special surprise goodie bag.

Wichita Grand Opera's Opera Education coloring book project is sponsored in part by The Charlotte Brickler Trust. Margaret Pent, concept and design; Colleen Craig, associate editor; Jac Send, illustrator; Sam T. Jack, story adaptation.

— Patricia Kiernan Johnson



Tosca

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INNOVATIONS

POLISHING THE OPERA

Calgary Opera has partnered with Urban Venus Nail Bar, a local spa, to create a custom nail polish portfolio based on its 2013-2014 season theme, “Be Seduced.”

“We were thrilled when asked to be involved in this unique project to develop merchandise for Calgary Opera,” says Urban Venus Founder Rachel Ong. The collection includes three polishes packaged in a decorative box and retails for \$35. Each color represents one of Calgary Opera’s mainstage productions: ruby red for *The Italian Girl from Algiers*, sky blue for *The Flying Dutchman* and a delicate cream for *Madame Butterfly*.

This “fashion-forward” way to support Calgary Opera is available online at calgaryopera.com/seductivenailpolish, at Urban Venus Nail Bar locations and at Calgary Opera performances throughout the season while supplies last. All proceeds from the nail polish sales go to Calgary Opera.

— Katherine L. Ehle



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INNOVATIONS

ACT II: A FEAST

Forget a drink after the opera. **Opera Philadelphia** invited its patrons to a wedding reception for November performances of *Svadba-Wedding*.

The company's *Opera in the City* series brings the art form off of its main stage, the venerable Academy of Music, into unexpected venues throughout the community. But it's not just about placing an innovative work in an unusual place: for the series' inaugural production, *Svadba-Wedding*, the company created an corollary event, a participatory encore involving the cast, audience, staff, a Balkan band and a buffet of authentic Serbian dishes.

Svadba-Wedding, by Serbian-Canadian composer Ana Sokolovic, premiered at Queen of Puddings Theatre in Toronto in 2011 and has since travelled to Western Canada, Serbia and a host of other international venues. The 50-minute work is an *a capella* celebration of friendship and love, arranged for six female voices and set on the eve of a young woman's wedding. David B. Devan, general director of Opera Philadelphia, says *Svadba* was "the perfect choice" for *Opera in the City* because it created opportunities for the audience to engage in a cultural experience not only musically, but socially as well.

Directly following the final bow of the one-act work, the West Philadelphia Orchestra emerged, struck up a Balkan folk tune, and paraded the cast and audience out of the theater (a pumphouse recently converted by Philadelphia FringeArts) and into an adjoining space decorated as a church basement, complete with plastic tablecloths and strings of holiday lights. There, audience and cast all became guests at an imagined and boisterous wedding reception, complete with cast member Jacqueline Woodley cutting the cake.

The exuberance of the operatic performance was translated into this second act, where audience members danced to the Balkan music of the West Philadelphia Orchestra, and munched on authentic Serbian food. The menu was a delicious array of delicacies — prebranac, sarma and cicvara — carefully coordinated with members of the Serbian community to ensure that the culinary experience resonated fully with the opera, which is based on Serbian poetry but given a contemporary setting.

The idea for the epicurean encore came from Devan, who says that when he first heard the work he "didn't want it to end" and that the wedding reception is therefore a "natural progression from meeting these characters and experiencing the night before a Serbian wedding."

Food at, before or around an operatic performance is not an uncommon pairing for community engagement. **Edmonton Opera** has been producing highly popular opera brunches as a separate subscription series to their season for over a decade. **Opera Saratoga's** annual Pasta and Puccini event has morphed from a fundraiser to an annual sold-out season kickoff event at the Saratoga National Golf Course, which is well known for its banquets and fine dining.

Eating together is a foundational element of any community, and the Serbian feast at Opera Philadelphia's *Svadba-Wedding* created a sense of connectedness and belonging among audience members. The clear link between an operatic work and a big party is not always a natural fit (hard, perhaps to think of a feast following *Salome*) but bringing all the senses to bear on a night at the opera builds, in many cases, an unique connection between the work and its audience, as well as a company and its varied publics.



Guests dance to the music of the West Philadelphia orchestra at the wedding reception. Photo by Dominic M. Mercier.

— Brianna Wells

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PEOPLE

Keitaro Harada steps into a new role as associate conductor of **Arizona Opera**. Keitaro made his company debut with Arizona Opera last season in a performance of *Tosca* in Phoenix and looks forward to conducting *Don Pasquale* in Tucson in the coming spring.

Wayne S. Brown, director of music and opera for the National Endowment for the Arts since 1997 and a native Detroit, has been named president and CEO of **Michigan Opera Theatre** (MOT). He succeeds David DiChiera who founded MOT in 1971 and has served as general director since its inception. Dr. DiChiera will remain on staff as artistic director.

Opera Philadelphia, in collaboration with **Gotham Chamber Opera** and **Music-Theatre Group** in New York, has selected composer **Andrew Norman** as its third composer in residence. Norman's symphonic works have been commissioned and premiered by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the Minnesota Orchestra, among others. Funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the composer in residence program is designed to foster American operatic masterpieces through personalized creative development and intensive, hands-on composition opportunities for promising composers.

San Francisco Opera welcomes several new staff members, including **Randy Kyle** as director of human resources; **Jarrod Bell** as chief information officer; and two new senior production staff members: Technical Director **Erik Walstad** and Resident Lighting Designer **Gary Marder**. **Andrew Berger**, a veteran arts administrator and educator with more than 20 years of experience with New York area cultural institutions, has joined **San Francisco Opera Guild** as director of education.

Syracuse Opera has appointed **Lisa Smith** as managing director, **Sue McKenna** as director of marketing and public relations, and **Bari Tassinaro** as production manager. Smith will oversee day-to-day business operations, including fundraising and development, financial management and future planning of the company. McKenna returns to Syracuse Opera following a hiatus during which she was director of marketing and public relations at the Jewish Community Center of Syracuse. Tassinaro also returns to Syracuse Opera, where she was formerly director of operations. She has been active over the past several years as a freelance stage manager, technical director and production manager throughout the northeast.



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Utah Symphony | Utah Opera announced the appointment of **Caleb Harris** as Utah Opera chorus master. After a decade as chorus master, **Susanne Sheston** has decided to pursue other professional music opportunities. Harris enjoys an active career as a pianist, chamber musician, conductor, and vocal and opera coach.

The Collegiate Chorale announces the addition of two new members of the company's executive team. **Ted Sperling** and **Edward Barnes** join Music Director James Bagwell and Executive Director Jennifer Collins as artistic director and producing director, respectively. Sperling's projects with The

Chorale have previously included concert performances of *The Firebrand of Florence* (conductor, 2009), *The Grapes of Wrath* (conductor, 2010), and *Something Wonderful: A Broadway Evening with Deborah Voigt* (conductor/director, 2011). Barnes, a composer, musician and producer, has collaborated with The Chorale since 2003. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Barnes' first opera, *Feathertop*, was produced in New York by the American Opera Center. He was a founding director of The Metro Ensemble, a Los Angeles based musical theater troupe, and was most recently the managing director of American Lyric Theater (New York City).

KUDOS



The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts will recognize the artistry of soprano **MARTINA ARROYO** at the Kennedy Center Honors on December 8. Noted for her interpretations of Verdi, Puccini, Strauss and Mozart, and equally

distinguished for her commitment to contemporary music, she has premiered works of William Bolcom and Carlo Franci, and was chosen to present the world premiere of Samuel Barber's *Andromache's Farewell*, as well as Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Momente*. Arroyo served on the National Endowment for the Arts for six years and continues to participate as an invited panelist and moderator. In addition, she remains actively associated with the National Council on the Arts as an Ambassador for the Arts. She sits on the Board of Directors of Carnegie Hall, The Metropolitan Opera Guild and The Collegiate Chorale, as well as The Voice Foundation. The Honors Gala will be broadcast on CBS for the 36th consecutive year as a two-hour primetime special on Sunday, December 29.



Musical America, now in its third century as a resource for the performing arts, has named **AUDRA MCDONALD** as their Musician of the Year. Among numerous other accolades, McDonald has received five Tony Awards, including three for

her musical performances in *Carousel* (1994), *Ragtime* (1998) and *Porgy and Bess* (2012), and two for dramatic

productions: Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (2004) and Terrence McNally's *Masterclass* (1996), where her role as a vocal student required her to sing a Verdi aria in every performance. Born in Germany and raised in California, McDonald studied at the Juilliard School, from which she received her degree in voice in 1993. The annual Musical America Awards was presented in a special ceremony at Lincoln Center on Tuesday, December 17.



The inaugural Sherrill Milnes VOICE Award was presented to soprano **DIANA SOVIERO** on October 29. The award was presented at a gala fundraiser for the Savannah VOICE Festival as part of National Opera Week. A New Jersey

native, Soviero studied at the Juilliard School and was a recipient of the Richard Tucker Award. She made her debut with Chautauqua Opera in 1969, at New York City Opera in 1973, Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1979 and San Francisco Opera in 1982. In 1987, she made her debuts at both La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera. The V.O.I.C. Experience Foundation was founded in 2001 by Milnes, the distinguished baritone, with his wife, soprano Maria Zouves, as an arts education program dedicated to bringing the highest level of opera and theater experts to work on programs that teach, inspire and share knowledge of great singing and performing traditions with talented artists and diverse audiences.

IN MEMORIAM



Dramatic soprano and voice teacher **PATRICIA DOWELL SCIMECA** passed away September 23 at Calvary Hospital in the Bronx after a long illness. Born and raised in Garland, TX, she relocated to the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where she was a New York District winner and an Eastern Regional finalist twice in the Metropolitan Opera's annual young singers competition. She also won the Liederkrantz Foundation's Richard Wagner Division Awards Competition and the Geraldine Farrar prize of the San Diego Opera's Young Artists program. Scimeca created the role of Anne Hutchinson in Richard Owens' *Mary Dyer* at its world premiere at New York Lyric Opera in 1979 and the role of Cassandra in Sam Belich's *Trojan Women* in New York in 1982. In recent years, she devoted more time to teaching and training promising singers. For OPERA America, she helped guide the design of the new Feedback Auditions program and served as a panelist in the inaugural session. She was elected to the National Opera Center Board of Overseers in the spring. OPERA America is deeply grateful to Patricia Scimeca and her husband, Dr. Michael Scimeca, who established the Patricia Scimeca Fund for Emerging Singers. Income from the Fund will support the Feedback Auditions program into the future. Gifts in her memory can be made to OPERA America/Patricia Scimeca Fund for Emerging Singers.



RAY DOLBY, the American inventor recognized around the world for developing groundbreaking audio technologies, as well as a longstanding member of the board of San Francisco Opera, died September 12 at his home in San Francisco at the age of 80. Dolby founded Dolby Laboratories in 1965 and created an environment where scientists and engineers continue to advance the science of sight and sound to make entertainment and communications more engaging. His pioneering work in noise reduction and surround sound led to the development of many state-of-the-art technologies, for which he held more than 50 U.S. patents. Today, Dolby Laboratories' technologies are an essential part of the creative process for recording artists and filmmakers, who continue to use Dolby tools to bring their visions to life.



ERIC WILLIAM KJELLMARK, JR. died in Fort Lauderdale on November 4 at the age of 85. Kjellmark served as general director of OperaDelaware, and as treasurer and vice president of Wilmington's Grand Opera House. He devoted many years working with OPERA America on its Board of Directors. Kjellmark received a bachelor's of civil engineering from Cornell University, then served two years in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He worked as chemical engineer and manager of marketing planning for E.I. DuPont de Nemours for 32 years.



RUSSELL PATTERSON, founder and longtime artistic director of Lyric Opera of Kansas City, died on October 1 in Cape Cod at the age of 85. A Mississippi native, he spent most of his professional life in Kansas City. In addition to his 40 years with Lyric Opera of Kansas City, from 1951-1959 he played with the Kansas City Philharmonic and served as artistic director of the Kansas City Symphony from 1982-1986. After his retirement from Lyric Opera of Kansas City, he relocated to Cape Cod where he continued to conduct at the Cape Cod Sinfonietta and the Chatham Chorale from 2002-2006, as well as lecturing about opera for the Princess Cruise Line. Patterson was one of the founders of OPERA America, served on the advisory panel of the National Endowment for the Arts, and was a consultant to the Ford Foundation and the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund.

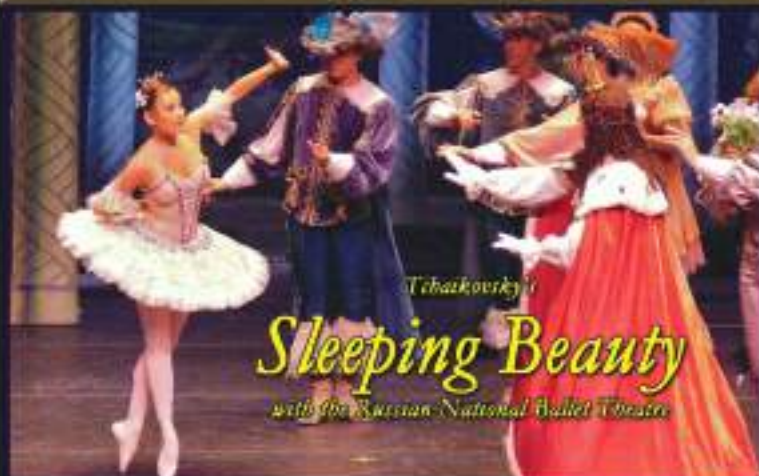


CONRAD SUSA, distinguished composer of opera and choral works, and professor of composition at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, died at his home in San Francisco on November 21. He was 78 years old. Susa's widely performed chamber opera *Transformations*, a recasting of Grimms' fairy tales by poet Anne Sexton, was commissioned by Minnesota Opera and premiered in 1973. His opera *The Dangerous Liaisons* was commissioned by San Francisco Opera and premiered in 1994 with an all-star cast, including Frederica von Stade, Renée Fleming, Judith Forst, Johanna Meier and Thomas Hampson. The work has since been revived at Washington National Opera and DiCapo Opera Theater in New York. His choral works are firmly rooted in the American choral repertoire. Susa joined the composition faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music in 1988 and served a 10-year tenure as chair of composition.

Wichita Grand Opera

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2014 Season



Tchaikovsky's
Sleeping Beauty
with the Russian National Ballet Theatre

Jan. 5, 2014, 3:30pm - Century II Concert Hall



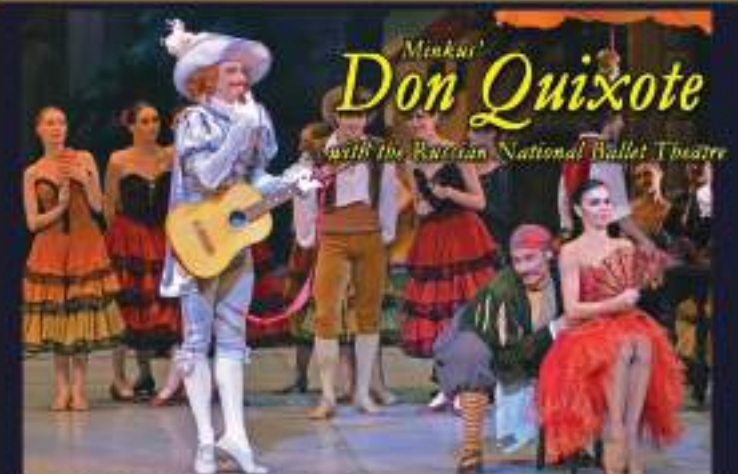
Rossini's
William Tell
WGO New Production

Feb. 22, 2014, 7:00pm - Century II Concert Hall



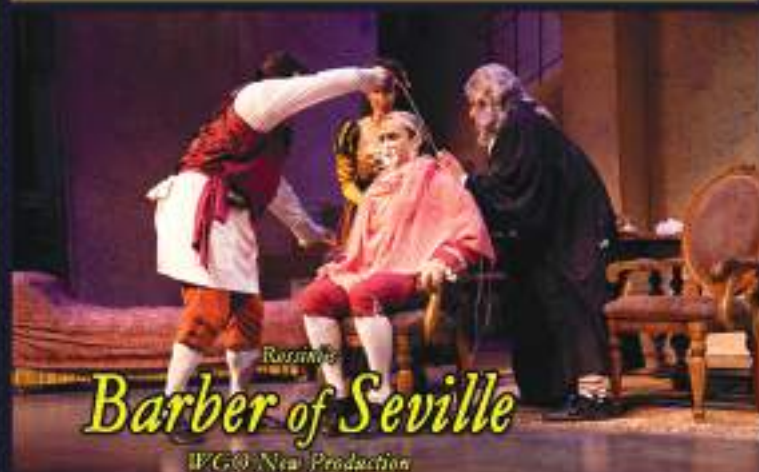
Puccini's
Tosca
WGO New Production

April 12, 2014, 7:00pm - Century II Concert Hall



Minkus's
Don Quixote
with the Russian National Ballet Theatre

April 26, 2014, 7:00pm - Century II Concert Hall



Rossini's
Barber of Seville
WGO New Production

May 31, 2014, 7:00pm - Wichita Orpheum Theatre



"The Great Gatsby"
Chairmen's Opera Ball

May 10, 2014, 6:30pm - Wichita Marriott

Bay Area Pioneers: Mining the Imagination

Buoyed by San Francisco Opera, itself a beacon of contemporary repertoire, the Bay Area serves as fertile ground for entrepreneurial opera companies producing adventuresome new work.

JANET SMITH talks with pioneers mining operatic gold.





Guadalupe Peraza and Catherine Rothrock in Hector Armienta's *La Llorona*, Part II of the *Aguas Ancestrales Trilogy* which was co-produced by Teatro Latea and Opera Cultura in 2012. Photo by Anthony Ruiz Photography.

From the Gold Rush to the computer age, San Francisco has always been a cultural touchstone of exploration and innovation. But with new companies seemingly emerging each season, imagination is in full bloom: last year, within an hour's drive, one could catch *La traviata* set amid the Castro District's AIDS epidemic; an atmospheric new telling of a Mexican myth; and a multi-projection, dance-infused take on the life of Paul Gauguin.

"I think that the Bay Area, and California, have always been about experimentation, whether that's been in lifestyle or artistically," explains composer Paul Dresher of the eponymous **Paul Dresher Ensemble**. Pointing to the region's well known musical mavericks, like the Kronos Quartet and John Adams, he says "I think there's this underlying idea that you're on the frontier and you can invent your own world."

With that sort of pioneering spirit, Bay Area troupes are carving out unique identities. While traditionalists might fear the shadow of **San Francisco Opera** (SFO), these pioneers bask in a halo effect that enables emerging companies to complement, contrast and sometimes even upend what's happening at that monumental institution. At **Opera Parallèle**, it's true the company counts on SFO's more intrepid patrons hitting their productions during the off-season. But as its artistic administrator, composer Jacques Desjardins, notes, "Our interest is really to go to the culturally curious who might not have thought of going to the opera."

Mark Streshinsky, general director of **West Edge Opera** in Berkeley, says that desire for new audiences drives programming, and that clichés only encourage him to break down the barriers. "My favorite comment is 'I hate opera, but I love this,'" he says. For others, it's about targeting a specific audience. "On a personal level, I know that opera is not something that the Latin or Hispanic community think of when they think 'Let's go out this weekend,'" says composer

Hector Armienta, who started **Opera Cultura** as a way to reach, and better reflect, that demographic.

The menu of choices among these companies is broad — from radically updated classics to rock-styled concerts and multimedia spectacles — but what ties them together is a common drive to hook new viewers. In the case of West Edge Opera, that means putting what Streshinsky calls the "West Edge twist" on each production, and that can apply to an older baroque work as easily as a 21st-century piece. This season's staging of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* drew on a centuries-old source, but Streshinsky, working with conductor Gilbert Martinez, did the equivalent of major surgery to make it accessible to a contemporary audience, cutting about 16 characters.

"It was completely in modern dress," explains Streshinsky, whose inspiration was the Kennedy era. Baroque fans bored by staid productions welcomed the reprieve of a sexier, shorter take. "I think today's opera audiences really prefer a shorter piece," he says. "We're not shortening for budgetary reasons."

West Edge is just as likely to look for different ways to stage new works, as well. Streshinsky is particularly proud of last season's critically lauded *Bonjour M. Gauguin*. He was initially drawn to the beauty of the Debussy-like music of Italian composer Fabrizio Carlone. But he also saw the potential to mix in multisensory effects: projections of the painter's art and dance by Kunst-Stoff Arts, along with the singing and drama. "We created this nonlinear evening about this fascinating character and I thought, 'This is the kind of work I want to do,'" Streshinsky says.

Heading inland, up the Central Valley to Modesto, the farthest afield of these upstart companies, **Townsend Opera**, is also presenting an innovative palette of old and new. "Our decisions are not driven by a need to compete with other opera companies but on the realization and acceptance



Marco Panuccio, Susanna Biller, Julienne Walker, Jason Detwiler and Tom Snyder in Opera Parallèle's production of Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*. Photo by Steve DiBartolomeo.

that our art form is not accessible to a broader swath of the community," says Matthew Buckman, who took over Townsend Opera as executive director in 2008.

Townsend is not averse to presenting classics, nor does the company shy away from innovative interpretations. Last year, Buckman staged an AIDS-era *Traviata*, but Townsend's capacity for innovation ventures off traditional repertoire, as well. Its Opera Remix series, launched in 2011, mashes up forms and presents them in a casual event that's part concert, part cabaret, part good-time party. "We had a street party beforehand, and people could bring food and drinks in; it was like a concert with a cabaret and video element," Buckman says. "We had eight or nine classic rock tunes and arias arranged for what we called a rock orchestra. We showed people that this music they see as inaccessible to them is actually similar to a lot of other music; it's just framed differently."

Subsequent Opera Remix events have integrated gospel, *Les Mis*, the Eagles and *Rigoletto*. "I'm proud of the work we've done," says Buckman. "We went into this project not saying we had the answers," Buckman admits. "At least we're seeing young people going to the opera and walking away with a good experience."

Opera Parallèle has taken the bold step of leaving classical repertoire behind altogether. Originally called the Ensemble Parallèle, it changed its name to Opera Parallèle in 2012. "We said, 'How are we going to decide repertoire from now on?'" Desjardins explains. "We decided we can do original works made for our size; we can go up to 28 musicians, so we can't do grand opera, but we can do works made for our size. And we can do reductions and we can commission work for our size."

Such parameters have not limited the company's imagination: among their choices have been a re-orchestrated *Wozzeck* to a reduction of John Harbison's *Great Gatsby*, the

"WE CAN'T DO GRAND OPERA, BUT WE CAN DO
WORKS MADE FOR OUR SIZE. AND WE CAN DO REDUCTIONS
AND WE CAN COMMISSION WORK FOR OUR SIZE."

“THE MENU OF CHOICES AMONG THESE COMPANIES IS BROAD — FROM RADICALLY UPDATED CLASSICS TO ROCK-STYLED CONCERTS AND MULTIMEDIA SPECTACLES — BUT WHAT TIES THEM TOGETHER IS A COMMON DRIVE TO HOOK NEW VIEWERS.”

latter turned into a multimedia, Art Deco-infused chamber version for 11 singers and 30 musicians by Desjardins himself. “That’s given it new life and it’s now being done around the country,” he points out.

In the case of two other 20th-century works, Kurt Weill’s *Mahagonny Songspiel* and Francis Poulenc’s *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, the company is interweaving them and reimagining them, with the help of visionary Production Designer Brian Staufenbiel and Artistic Director Nicole Paiement. They’re set in a future where water and resources are depleted — an attempt, as Opera Parallèle so often does, at finding what Executive Director Tod Brody calls “an intersection of art and social ideas.”

An even more urgent crisis from today’s headlines is at the center of *Anyat*, an opera by British composer Adam Gorb and librettist Ben Kaye that will see its North American premiere at Opera Parallèle in June 2014. It tells the dark, thoroughly researched story of four Eastern European women who are sold into sexual slavery, and the company has worked closely with community groups to organize special events and talks around its debut. Still, Desjardins stresses the music always comes first: “We’re not putting the politics before the music. We liked the music and then said, ‘Let’s add our voice to the cause.’”

Opera Parallèle’s repertoire grows bolder by the day. Right now, the company is developing what may be its most ambitious work yet: a commission called *Gesualdo: Prince of Darkness*. With Marvel comics-style projections, it tells the story of a real 16th-century madrigal composer and prince who killed his wife, her servant and her lover. Los Angeles composer Dante De Silva has integrated renaissance sounds and instruments like the theorbo into the computer-age production aesthetic.

The Paul Drescher Ensemble is committed to contemporary work, but it is also dedicated to building it, from scratch, at all times. “What makes our work unique is the intensive collaborative process and that questioning,” composer Drescher, a long-time, vital member of the West Coast’s new-music scene, explains. “I develop my projects with the people I want to work with. That might be a singer or a percussionist or a librettist or a director, and then we look around for what is right story or narrative. So it usually starts with an artistic collaboration and we don’t know what we’re going to make.”

Time, of course, is money, and such a lengthy development process is costly. “That’s why we only do a piece every couple of years,” Drescher says. “It can take four years from production to premiere and a lot of that is fundraising.” His best-known, perhaps most “conventional” opera is the 2006 solo chamber



John Duykers in Musical Traditions, Inc.’s production of Drescher’s *The Tyrant*. Photo by Paul Drescher.

piece *The Tyrant*, in which the singer directly interacts with the six musicians. Written for contemporary-music tenor and long-time collaborator John Duykers, it tells the story of a paranoid autocrat who’s too afraid to leave his throne in case it’s grabbed by someone else. Like so many of Drescher’s works, it took years to create, but has been produced frequently throughout the United States.

Hector Armienta’s Opera Cultura in San Jose produces his own compositions as well, but his motivation, personally and professionally, is filling a big gap that remains in programming for Latino audiences despite the art form’s many offerings in the region. “We see ourselves as really a place for those interested in Latin and Hispanic culture and trying to understand that culture through opera,” he explains. “We’re the only company outside of New York that produces operatic work based on Latin culture.”



Townsend Opera's production of Sullivan's *The Mikado*. Photo courtesy of Townsend Opera.

“WE SEE OURSELVES AS REALLY A PLACE FOR THOSE INTERESTED
IN LATIN AND HISPANIC CULTURE AND
TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THAT CULTURE THROUGH OPERA.”

Armienta's own operas draw on Mexican-American culture and music. His “Ancient Waters Trilogy” is inspired by the very personal stories of the women in his own family. In the first, *La Llorona*, he introduces the folk legend of “the weeping woman,” about a protagonist who sacrifices her children to be with the man she loves. In the second, *Rio de Mujeres (River of Women)*, Armienta interweaves it with the story of his own grandmother and mother's hardship living in poverty along the San Antonio River.

With his newest project, *Tales of a Pilgrimage*, however, Armienta is drawing on stories from his community — specifically, the stories of other people who have immigrated to the United States from Mexico. Set to debut in March 2014, it is a smaller-scale work designed to travel well — even to Mexico itself.

Armienta sees his mission as “building a bridge” between his own community and the operatic music world. Could a metaphor for the San Francisco scene be more apt? Like the structures that connect the vast, diverse communities that dot the Bay Area, these ambitious, risk-taking opera companies are building new bridges to the gold standards of the past and to the silver-lined possibilities of the future. ■

Janet Smith is arts editor of Vancouver's Georgia Straight, and writes regularly about opera, dance and theater. A member of the Vancouver Film Critics Circle, she has covered Vancouver's cultural scene for more than two decades.

UPCOMING ARTISTIC PROGRAMS AT THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER



CONVERSATIONS

Thursday, March 20 at 7:00 p.m.
In Conversation with Lawrence Brownlee



CREATORS IN CONCERT

Wednesday, April 2 at 7:00 p.m.
Music and Words with Paola Prestini

Sunday, February 16 at 3:00 p.m.
SPECIAL EVENT: Transmission from The Dallas Opera:
Death and the Powers by Tod Machover and Robert Pinsky

Wednesday, May 7 at 7:00 p.m.
Music and Words with Ricky Ian Gordon,
presented in collaboration with Cincinnati Opera



EMERGING ARTIST RECITAL SERIES

Sunday, March 16 (Time TBD)
2013 Music Academy of the West,
Marilyn Horne Song Competition Winners
John Brancy, baritone with Mario Antonio Marra, pianist



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Tuesday, February 25, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.
Don't Quit Your Day Job (Yet): How to Pay the Bills Offstage

Tuesday, April 29, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.
SUPERFANS: Opera's Devoted Online Community

Advanced registration is recommended and can be made online at operaamerica.org/ForArtists. Fees may apply for certain events.

All events are presented at the National Opera Center in New York City and will be streamed online at operaamerica.org.

A Conversation with Thomas Hampson



Photo by Dario Acosta.

Born in Elkhart and raised in Spokane, baritone THOMAS HAMPSON is the quintessential American artist. As performer, teacher and advocate, his distinguished voice is regularly heard on the global stage. On the occasion of National Opera Week, for which he served as 2013 chairman, he sat down with Patricia Kiernan Johnson to reveal the forces that sustain his passion for the voice.

PKJ: What first sparked your love of opera?

TH: In a lot of ways, opera and classical music found me. I grew up in a wonderfully structured educational environment: I attended a parochial school, I studied music, I played piano. My two older sisters are very musical, and my mother played the church organ. Opera was not one of the things we listened to, though there was quite a bit of American musical comedy. It wasn't really until my college days that I discovered Schubert and Faure, and later Verdi and Mozart, that the whole magical world of opera opened.

PKJ: What was the first opera you attended and who took you?

TH: My first exposure to live opera was as a performer: I sang in the chorus for *The Barber of Seville* and *Così fan tutte*. I never actually saw an opera until a visiting production of *Rigoletto* came to Spokane. That intrigued me a great deal. But the epiphany was a Seattle Opera production of *Falstaff* with Sir Geraint Evans. It was quite miraculous. I got the "Hmm...I get what this is all about."

PKJ: Your career spans song, concert work and opera. How do they inform each other?

TH: I am on a bit of a mission to re-energize the idea that one is a singer, and we sing different things. We lend our talents, our bodies and our voices to other people's thoughts and musical ideas and musical language. Being caught in a repertoire of just recitals or just concerts or just opera is a big mistake. There's an inner life you find in recitals and concerts that's very illuminating for your work in a theatrical environment.

Quite frankly, a lot of opera singers would do very well to find the inside of a song, the inside of an emotion in a delicate language in a specific musical context. I've always been completely convinced of the wonder and even health of singing

all kinds of music, whether it's the lighter muse of Broadway or operetta in Europe, or that great theatrical moment of a *Don Giovanni* or a *Barber of Seville*.

PKJ: Who have been your most profound mentors?

TH: I would like to think that I've tried to learn from everyone I've been influenced by either in an electronic way or a physical way. I've had some wonderful teachers, I've been taken by the hand by some great conductors and teachers and coaches. I think that what people sometimes don't realize is that the world of classical music is a nurturing, bettering process for you as an artist. You never stop studying, you never stop seeking answers to questions you have either for the repertoire or your own abilities as you become more mature and experienced in this business. It is an incredibly innervating, exciting, frustrating, challenging profession.

PKJ: You are known for your great interest in teaching and giving master classes. What motivates this interest?

TH: There's nothing more addictive as a teacher, or as performer who teaches, than participating in that "Ah ha!" moment. You've participated in a ground-breaking moment of a young person who desperately wants to do what you do. It's a very special moment that I love to be a part of. It's not about bringing my wisdom and imparting it on someone else. It's a sharing experience. And for any performer, it's a very important process of humbly re-identifying the real reason why we do — and are able to do — what we do as artists and as singers.

PKJ: You've frequently spoken of great interest in technology. How has that influenced your approach to learning and teaching?

TH: I've always been a gadget guy. I suppose it started with Tinkertoys and Lincoln Logs and Legos. I've always loved how things get put together and work. So, when the personal computer really took hold — that was kind of a no-brainer for me to be interested in, just the phenomenon of how it worked. I'm fascinated by software. What drives my passion about this time in our civilization is that we're just starting to come into the blooming of the digital age. We have the ability to turn the whole paradigm of presentation and buying and selling and creating awareness for music completely on its head. It used to be that you produced musical product that you sold or performed. Now the digital revolution allows us to open up the doors and windows for events happening in real time so that audiences get closer to the live experience.



Thomas Hampson and Patricia Kiernan Johnson. Photo by Carrie Krol for Lyric Opera of Chicago.

“YOU NEVER STOP STUDYING, YOU NEVER STOP SEEKING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS YOU HAVE EITHER FOR THE REPERTOIRE OR YOUR OWN ABILITIES AS YOU BECOME MORE MATURE AND EXPERIENCED IN THIS BUSINESS. IT IS AN INCREDIBLY INNERVATING, EXCITING, FRUSTRATING, CHALLENGING PROFESSION.”

PKJ: What motivated you to establish the Hampson Foundation?

TH: Clever name, don't you think? I'm very passionate about the concept or idea that music is a language and I think we've kind of wandered off of that a little bit in our contemporary times. It's about song. It's about song in any language. The Hampson Foundation is about exploring poetry and music wedded in an art form called song that tells the story of people's lives. I think any epoch of any culture explored through the eyes of the poets and the ears of the composers tells us and informs us what those cultures mean, where those people come from. If we don't know a culture, what are we going to do? We can look at their poetry, listen to their music, explore thinkers and look at the historical context of decisions that people have made. We obviously inform ourselves quite easily between the old world, "Europe," and the new world, "America," but this dialogue is about exploring the arts and humanities as identifiers of myriad cultures through various epochs. I see the arts and humanities as a great diary of who we are as human beings and I find that infinitely interesting and even entertaining.

PKJ: If you weren't an opera singer, what would you be?

TH: I really don't know. I can't imagine my life without music. If I lost my voice, would I stay in music as a conductor or producer? I don't know. An administrator of an opera house? God forbid! That's a tough job. Something completely different where music is just an avocation is hard for me to imagine. Being a golf pro requires serious talent of which I only have a modicum.

To be an artist is a privilege, it is not a job. That's why it's very difficult for me to say what else I would do. I don't have that option — nor do I want that option. I know what I'm supposed to do now and I'm pretty convinced of why I'm here. I say that with phenomenal gratitude and sincere humbleness. It is a great honor to make your living as an artist. ■

Patricia Kiernan Johnson is director of marketing and communications for OPERA America.



Opera and the Politics of Protest

From the 16th century to the present day, opera has adapted and reacted to shifting political and cultural contexts, often rebelling against them. GRAEME KAY analyzes the response of opera to its times.

“Culture shouldn’t be interested in day-to-day politics,” composer-conductor Iván Fischer told *The New York Times* in October. But he immediately qualified this eyebrow-raising remark, made in the context of a discussion of his new opera, *The Red Heifer*, the tale of a 19th-century blood libel and a musical bellwether for encroaching anti-Semitism in Fischer’s home country of Hungary. Nailing his colors to the mast, the message was plain enough for Hungary’s political masters to read: “We want to be valid next year and the year after,” Fischer said, “but I think culture has a strong responsibility to find the essence, the real concealed truth which lies behind the day-to-day.” A courageous statement for a musician whose livelihood, and those of his musicians, depends on state support.

In a year that celebrates the bicentenaries of Verdi, whose works have been interpreted and reinterpreted as rallying cries for Italian reunification, and of Wagner, subject of an arrest warrant for revolutionary activity in Dresden in 1849, plus the centennial of Britten, whose relationship with muse and lover Peter Pears was common knowledge at a time when homosexuality was still a crime, it is particularly appropriate that opera companies and opera lovers are even now being called to the barricades. Gay activists taunted conductor Valery Gergiev and soprano Anna Netrebko at the opening night of the **Metropolitan Opera**, lambasting them for refusing to dissociate themselves from recent anti-gay legislation emanating from the Russian government, and Gergiev continued to be greeted by catcalls at Carnegie Hall and, most recently, London’s Barbican Hall. Managements under siege have been supported by members of the audience who counter that a musical performance is not an appropriate platform for political protest, and that once the audience’s and performers’ attention has been drawn to the object of protest, the music should be allowed to speak for itself.

But what happens when the repertoire itself defines the very nature of political engagement?

THE EUROPEAN LEGACY

The machinations of royal and ducal courts from medieval times to 18th-century Sweden were bread-and-butter for Verdi



in *I Lombardi*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Rigoletto* and *Un ballo in Maschera*, as was Mozart's attack on aristocracy in *Le nozze di Figaro*. But these too were courageous acts: both composers risked falling foul of the censors and other guardians of propriety — and often did. Mussorgsky, composer of *Boris Godunov*, initially struggled against a *ukase* (decree) prohibiting the portrayal in opera of Russian Tsars.

A useful exegesis on the continuum of this subject is provided by John Bokina, whose *Opera and Politics: From Monteverdi to Henze* links repertoire at various stages of operatic history to “the trajectory of Western politics, the ascendancy and demise of the aristocratic rule, the troubled reign of the commercial classes, the failed search for a radical alternative.” Monteverdi's operas reflected Machiavellian notions of absolutism, but by the time of Mozart's *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, absolutism was a spent force, shortly to be overturned completely by the French Revolution, the iconic Bastille prison of which is symbolized in Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Wagner's *Parsifal* evokes a political Utopia, and the post-Romantic operas of Richard Strauss, notably *Elektra*, embrace a Freudian world of mental hysteria.

As late as 1953, the British courtiers attending the premiere of Britten's *Gloriana*, heralded as a coronation gift to the new Queen Elizabeth, were outraged to discover that the U.K.'s leading composer had delivered a warts-and-all portrait of the turbulent and intrigue-riddled life, loves and death of her distant predecessor, the “Virgin” Queen, Elizabeth the First. Had modern jurisprudence not on the whole disfavoured the incarceration (or worse) of errant composers, the outlook for Britten might have been bleak. It is a sobering thought that the British Government's Lord Chamberlain's Office was responsible for the censorship of all theater until as late as 1968, when the role was finally abolished.

For Britten, *Gloriana* was part of a pattern in the post-war decade: in *Peter Grimes* and *Albert Herring*, he tackled small-town politics respectively in tragic and comedic vein; *The Rape of Lucretia* was a grim exploration of sexual politics; and *Billy Budd* mined the politics of those in power to crush the powerless individual's patent goodness. And while the 1960s and 70s sparked radical questioning of the established

decorous values of cultural conservatism, Henze's *The Bassarids* appeared in 1966 as a voice of dissent. While based on the conflict between Pentheus and the Dionysus, as found in *The Bacchae*, Henze's opera is seen to offer a paradigm of the struggle between the Establishment and the New Left. That same year Pierre Boulez, displeased with contemporary repertoire, famously suggested in a newspaper interview that the most elegant solution to the moribund state of opera was “to blow the opera house up.”

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Post-war American opera had its own path to pursue: Robert Ward's Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *The Crucible*, commissioned by **New York City Opera** and premiered in 1961, was based on the Salem witch trial play by Arthur Miller, a transparent allegory of Miller's own experience as political prey to Senator Joseph McCarthy. But after Samuel Barber's historico-political *Antony and Cleopatra*, commissioned by the Met for the opening of its new home in 1966, American opera veered from politics, such that by the 1980s some were beginning to question whether opera any longer possessed the musical and dramatic equipment, nor its composers the passion, to deal with contemporary issues or moments from more recent history: the politics of Parnassus, surely, were passé.

True, Carlisle Floyd brought Robert Penn Warren's masterful political novel *All the King's Men* to life with *Willie Stark*, premiered by **Houston Grand Opera** (HGO) in 1981, but it wasn't until 1987, when Air Force One touched down on the stage at Houston, and Richard Nixon greeted Mao-Tse Tung in John Adams' *Nixon in China*, that American opera began voraciously bringing page-one issues to the stage. An array of others followed: Thea Musgrave's epic *Simón Bolívar* brought the great Venezuelan liberator to life at Virginia Opera in 1995, even as Venezuela's neo-Bolivarian leader Hugo Chávez began his ascent. Myron Fink's *The Conquistador*, premiered by **San Diego Opera** in 1997, invited favourable comparison, in its treatment of political, religious and personal conflict between Jews and Christians, with Halévy's *La Juive*.



The momentum continued in 1995 with HGO's premiere of Stewart Wallace's *Harvey Milk* and in 2000 with **San Francisco Opera's** premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, in which the real-life protagonist in a redemptive murder-and-execution story, Sister Helen Prejean, is still very much in the thick of things. Adams continued to mine near-history in 1991 with the incendiary topic of a Palestinian hijacking, *The Death of Klinghoffer*, and again in 2005 with *Doctor Atomic*, the story of Robert Oppenheimer's work on the Manhattan Project. Anthony Davis, who explored the African American experience with *X, The Life and Times of Malcolm X* in 1986 at New York City Opera and *Amistad* with **Lyric Opera of Chicago** in 1997, returned to the stage in 2007 at **Opera Omaha** to address the tragic spiritual legacy of the Native American experience with *Wakonda's Dream*.

THE OPERA OF NOW

Though the partisans at the Met's opening night viewed Gergiev and his compatriot, Anna Netrebko, as complicit with those who would suppress the voices of gay men and women, such activists might have looked West this past summer for some consolation: at **Opera Theatre of Saint Louis**, Terence Blanchard's *Champion* painted a compassionate portrait of boxer Emile Griffith, taunted for, and by, his sexuality; and, at **The Santa Fe Opera**, Theodore Morrison's *Oscar* offered a fantasia on the last tragic years of Oscar Wilde's life. Neither is likely to be produced in the near future by the Mariinsky Opera, but both highly successful productions symbolize the capacity of opera not just to elevate the love that once dared not speak its name, but to reveal, in the words of Iván Fischer, the concealed truths of our time: even as the laws of one nation enshrine new freedoms, those of another embrace old hatreds.

There are, of course, new battles to be waged on the world, as well as the operatic stage: British composer Adam Gorb's *Any17*, now finding its way into the repertoire, is

a visceral one-act opera about the murderous global sex-trafficking industry. Second only to the drug industry as a black economy earner, the sex trade involves vulnerable girls from poor, mainly Eastern European backgrounds, being sold into prostitution and as sex slaves on empty promises of a better life in Western Europe. *Any17*, to be presented by San Francisco's **Opera Parallèle** in June, has been extensively workshopped and performed in concert, attracting positive reviews as much for its unflinching treatment of the subject as for Gorb's music, which has been praised for blending Eastern European idioms, jazz and musical theater to reflect the diverse cast of characters. Neither historical nor parochial, neither a parable nor an allegory, *Any17* takes on an all too real, all too current human tragedy.

We can hope that *Any17* serves as a wake-up call to politicians and those who police our borders, but the sad reality is that art is ultimately limited in its capacity to effect concrete social and political change. Such limitations are not confined to opera: Picasso's *Guernica* did not diminish the human capacity for inflicting the horrors of war, the literature of outspoken Nobel Laureate Maria Vargas Llosa has not eradicated corruption or brought prosperity to the powerless.

Despite the seeming futility, the voices of artists in every genre and generation refuse to be silenced, no less in the opera house, where influential citizens across the social, political and economic spectrum congregate with open eyes and ears. With placards in front of the house, and words and music from the stage, the antiphonal cry of a better world resounds. ■

Writer and broadcaster Graeme Kay is a former editor of Opera Now magazine. His publications include an audio biography of Beniamino Gigli, published on the Naxos label. He is currently a multiplatform producer for BBC Radio 3.

Pgs. 26-27: San Francisco Opera's production of Wallace's *Harvey Milk*. Photo courtesy of San Francisco Opera. | Chen-Ye Yuan as Chou En-lai, Maria Kanyova as Pat Nixon, Robert Orth as Richard Nixon and Thomas Hammons as Henry Kissinger in Opera Colorado's 2008 production of Adams' *Nixon in China*. Photo by Matthew Staver. | San Francisco Opera's 1992 production of Adams' *Death of Klinghoffer*. Photo by Marty Sohl. | Pg. 28: San Diego Opera's 1997 world premiere of Myron Fink's *The Conquistador*. Photo by Ken Howard. | Virginia Opera's 1995 world premiere production of Musgrave's *Simón Bolívar*. Photo by Kathy Keeney.

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Trustees as New Music Advocates

Opera companies with a stake in contemporary repertoire need trustees who buy in to the mission, both literally, with financial support, but also with an ardent capacity for sharing insight, cajoling colleagues, playing the skeptic, all while respecting artistic and organizational boundaries. DON LEE reports.





Robin Buck as Edgar in Long Beach Opera's 2013 production of Stewart Copeland's *Tell-Tale Heart*. Photo by Keith Ian Polakoff.

Passion and a checkbook are ideal requirements for an opera board member, but companies at the forefront of contemporary repertoire also know that deft leadership is vital to ensure that board members' enthusiasm is consonant with the opera's artistic vision. "The board's job is just overall guidance," says Frederick Peters, a member of OPERA America's National Opera Center Board of Overseers and a former board member of **The Glimmerglass Festival**. "It's not appropriate to say, 'Produce this piece or produce that piece.'" And yet Peters, a noted New York real estate executive who was once a student of composer Hugo Weisgall, makes an admission: "When Paul Kellogg was head of **New York City Opera** I did hawk him about reviving *Esther*. At one point my wife said, 'He sees you coming, and he heads for the exit.'"

Dale Johnson, artistic director of **Minnesota Opera**, remembers the days when his board's executive committee "made all the decisions." That changed in the early 90s, he says, when the board was reconstituted to focus on governance and advocacy and not on making artistic decisions. Today Johnson says the company's New Works Initiative has re-institutionalized board engagement in the artistic process. And Johnson welcomes it. "There are all smart people," he says. "Why would you want to shut out your greatest pals?"

Stories that emerge from behind the scenes about the trustee's role in creating new opera hardly smack of *Das Rheingold* theatrics. Established companies and experienced board members have learned to draw lines and define roles in order to manage the inherent tensions. Whether well-heeled or down at the heels, new music advocates don't lack opinions, but when carefully nurtured, they've learned how to work with staff to channel their enthusiasm in line with the mission.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

At **Long Beach Opera** (LBO), where the motto is "Expect the unexpected," board chair and former health care executive Susan Bienkowski says lesson number one is to define expectations at the outset. Before they are asked to join the LBO board, she makes sure prospective trustees understand where contemporary opera fits in the company mission. "Someone who loves only traditional opera won't find a happy home with us," she says. At Milwaukee's **Florentine Opera**, former trustee and now "life director" Lloyd Gerlach makes the case to bottom line-oriented colleagues that new operas are the "research & development" part of the mission. "If you're not trying new things, the business may fail," he tells them.

To underscore the necessity for innovation for his new

"NEW MUSIC ADVOCATES DON'T LACK OPINIONS, BUT WHEN CAREFULLY NURTURED, THEY'VE LEARNED HOW TO WORK WITH STAFF TO CHANNEL THEIR ENTHUSIASM IN LINE WITH THE MISSION."



Florentine Opera's 1998 American premiere of Lowell Liebermann's *Picture of Dorian Gray*. Photo by Rick Brodzeller.

trustees, Dale Johnson encourages them to ponder the slow path by which “hits” such as *Carmen* and *La traviata* became crowd-pleasers. As Johnson points out, the earliest audiences for these operas found their subject matter too vulgar, too provocative and too contemporary. Johnson is convinced that today’s operagoers are different. “The stories of our time are the stories we have to tell,” he says. “That may be most important thing for us to say to trustees.”

The typical board member is “more excited to underwrite a new production of *Traviata* than to bring a new work into the house,” says Peters, and that, he believes, is the biggest board-level challenge facing new opera advocates. Although he admits to having been “vociferous” about new music while on the Glimmerglass board, he recommends a more circumspect approach: “Don’t go in with guns blazing. Get to know the landscape first.” Florentine’s Gerlach concurs that an atmosphere of trust paves the way for an open exchange of opinions. “So if somebody wants to continue doing Puccini and I come in with Hans Werner Henze, I have a chance to convince him to give this thing a try,” he says.

But must an enthusiastic trustee check personal tastes at the boardroom door? “I will opine as to quality,” says Peters, “but, in terms of a piece having to be exactly what I like, it’s very important to dodge that trap.” His “hawking” of Weisgall’s *Esther* notwithstanding, he believes the board’s primary responsibility for new music projects should be fundraising.

“That’s all you want to do unless you’re invited to do more,” he says.

For opera patrons steeped in contemporary music, standing invitations may be in order. From their home outside Milwaukee, Lloyd and Mary Ann Gerlach travel all over the world to take in premieres and new productions. “Lloyd and I really are patrons of new or seldom-done works,” she says. After returning from a 1996 trip to Monte Carlo for the premiere of Lowell Liebermann’s *Picture of Dorian Gray*, they recommended the piece to Florentine Opera’s general director. “He liked it, and we helped finance it,” she says.

SELLING THE STORY

Though the board’s primary responsibility is to ensure the long-term financial integrity of the organization, when it comes to its role in supporting the opera’s artistic vision, LBO’s Bienkowski also wants her board to focus on the audience, but she notes that the board itself needs to be sold on the project so they can turn around and sell it. In her experience, successfully engaging audiences in contemporary opera depends on “the passion and interest you bring to the conversation. That passion and interest translates into new audience members.” Enabling that kind of interaction may range from community-wide advocacy initiatives to simple “bring-a-friend” programs that make extra tickets readily available to trustees.

“DON’T GO IN WITH GUNS BLAZING.
GET TO KNOW THE LANDSCAPE FIRST.”

To communicate their passion for a new work, trustees need a good story to tell. Whether it's an elevator speech or talking points for a dinner conversation, board members need narratives that reveal the miracle of opera coming to life: how the creative team was assembled, how the libretto is being shaped, how the music advances plot and character, how singers were cast and how the director made conceptual choices. Readings, workshops and rehearsals can serve business as well as artistic purposes. For trustees, patrons and community arts leaders witnessing the workshops generates buzz.

MONEY STILL MATTERS

Infectious enthusiasm is key to the launch of a new work, but it would be disingenuous to deny that mounting a new work is costly. Though commissioning has long been in the DNA of Minnesota Opera, fundraising for the 2007 premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon's *Grapes of Wrath* had been a huge effort, even before the economic downturn. Rather than seek money specifically for another new production, "we decided to think bigger," says Johnson. They set about raising \$7 million for a seven-year New Works Initiative, "so we could safely say to every composer we were commissioning, 'We have the money so let's just set about it.'" Now in its sixth year, the initiative has reached its financial goal, according to Johnson, and produced Kevin Puts' 2012 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Silent Night*.


Leading the New Works Initiative is a 14-member committee, a group of supporters who, Johnson says, "are

great advocates on the board, in the community and on the state level." In addition to raising money, Johnson says they get involved in discussions of new work — right down to dramaturgical issues they notice in workshops. Johnson likens it to a mentoring relationship. The production benefits immediately from the wisdom of successful people, he says, and in the longer term from these patrons' "sense of the piece being theirs, not just Minnesota Opera's."

Feelings of pride and ownership peak when the curtain finally goes up. "I love opening night and I love to be surprised," says Bienkowski. "The way things are conceived and brought to the stage has always been magic for me." At the same time, she admits she has walked into the hall on opening night worrying, "Oh my god, what if it's not very good?"

Any trustee who has invested in new opera knows a formula of thorough vetting, intensive workshopping and passionate advocacy does not guarantee success. But accepting and sharing critical and financial failure is also part of the trustee-advocate's job. Says Bienkowski, "you need to have an appetite to bear that risk." ■

Don Lee is a media producer, editor, writer and narrator based in St. Paul, MN. He previously served at NPR as executive producer of Performance Today.



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A photograph of opera singer Sasha Cooke as Mary Magdalene. She is wearing a white, long-sleeved, pleated dress with a gold belt, a yellow veil, and a large orange shawl draped over her shoulders. She is looking upwards and to the right with a slight smile. The background is dark with some stage lighting.

A Banner Year for American Opera

A spate of notable premieres and reprises made 2013 a banner year for contemporary composers. Based on discussions with more than a dozen leaders in the field, Opera America Magazine Editor MATTHEW SIGMAN examines the various factors influencing the opera ecosystem.

Like a good year for wine, a good year for opera depends on fertile soil, an obliging climate, a nurturing hand and that dark miracle of chance. And though there is no guarantee that a bountiful harvest will yield an enduring vintage, quantity and diversity are essential elements for nurturing oenophiles and operaphiles alike.

For the field of American opera, 2013 offered up a bumper crop, with so many notable productions of new American works — and reprises of contemporary classics now coming into the modern canon — that one hesitates to list them and risk the egregious offense of omission. There was *Doubt* at **Minnesota Opera**, *Champion* at **Opera Theatre of Saint Louis** (OTSL), *Oscar* at **The Santa Fe Opera**, *Dolores Claiborne* and *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* at **San Francisco Opera**, and *Two Boys* at the **Metropolitan Opera**. New York's **PROTOTYPE Festival** and **Washington National Opera's** American Opera Initiative breathed life into embryonic works. Not a month went by without a production of John Adams' *Nixon in China*, Mark Adamo's *Little Women* or Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, while classics like Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe* and Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* and *Of Mice and Men* remain perennial favorites.

The usual suspects for mainstage and second stage commissions and premieres have expanded to include **Fort Worth Opera**, **The Dallas Opera** and **Opera Philadelphia**. The dots that connect San Francisco's **Opera Parallèle**, Los Angeles' **The Industry**, Virginia's **UrbanArias** and New York's **Beth Morrison Projects** have forged a parallelogram of innovation akin to a national energy grid.

"It was a particularly fertile period," says Charles MacKay, general director of The Santa Fe Opera. "There must have been some important seeds planted three or four years ago to add to this great output. But what strikes me as being of particular interest has been the fact that a number of, if not most of these new works have dealt with challenging subject matter and that the operatic art form does not seem timid at all about addressing important social issues."

Where once composers and their librettists approached controversy allegorically, they now tackle politics, sexuality or technology head on. "These are topics that people want to drink and talk about," says the prolific and peripatetic director Kevin Newbury, who this year staged the premieres of *Doubt*, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* and *Oscar*, as well as *Paul's Case*

for *UrbanArias*. "You can't get people out of the lobby."

Stylistically, opera composers no longer feel compelled to take their cues from classical Mount Rushmore figures: Jake Heggie, who celebrates the theatrical voice in his operas, dedicated his score for *Moby-Dick* to Stephen Sondheim as a tribute to his profound influence. "I am primarily a theater composer drawn to the voice first and foremost," says Heggie. Matthew Aucoin, recently commissioned by the Met as part of its collaborative development partnership with Lincoln Center Theatre, feels the influence of Animal Collective and Radiohead. "The fire and the spirit of that music totally left an imprint on me," he says. And yet his role model remains Thomas Adès, the gifted British composer, conductor, and pianist who was recently commissioned by the Met for an adaptation of Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel*.

In addition to Aucoin, composers David T. Little and Joshua

Schmidt have also been selected to take part in the Met/LCT New Works Program. Little's *Dog Day*, nurtured through Beth Morrison Projects, incorporated Little's indie-classical band Newspeak. He has subsequently been co-commissioned by American Lyric Theatre and Fort Worth Opera for an opera currently titled *JFK*. Schmidt's riveting music-theater piece *Adding Machine*, based on a play by Elmer Rice, garnered accolades when it played off-Broadway in 2008, as did *A Minister's Wife*, based



Christine Brewer as Sister Aloysius Beauvier and Adriana Zabala as Sister James in Minnesota Opera's world premiere production of Douglas Cuomo's *Doubt*. Photo by Michal Daniel.

on Shaw's *Candida*, which was produced by Lincoln Center Theater in 2011.

The imaginative fire of today's young composers and librettists is further fueled by a generation of directors who also bring a vigorous theatrical aesthetic to the opera stage, as well as the quick-cut pacing and innovative technology of a generation weaned on film and video. "It used to be pejorative to say that something was influenced by film," says James Robinson, artistic director of OTSL, who staged the premieres of *Champion* and *Dolores Claiborne*. "These days we rely on film to tell stories. And it's legitimate." Over the next two seasons OTSL will breathe life into Ricky Ian Gordon's *27*, based on the life of Gertrude Stein, and Jack Perla's *Shalimar the Clown*, based on the novel by Salmon Rushdie.

Though the more successful adaptations of popular films often draw from the original source material, such as memoirs or novels, there is no question that Hollywood branding

builds buzz. What cinephile doesn't await the forthcoming Minnesota Opera premieres of Paul Moravec's *The Shining* and Kevin Puts' *The Manchurian Candidate*, and the Charles Wuorinen-Annie Proulx adaptation of *Brokeback Mountain* to be premiered in January by Madrid's Teatro Real?

THE EVOLVING ECONOMIC MODEL

One might easily explain away the bounty of 2013 as a result of the slow but steady economic recovery of the nation and the opera community from the recession of 2008. But economic shocks can push the pendulum of innovation either way. Commissions may be abandoned and premieres postponed, but considering the long gestation period for opera, where five years from concept to curtain is common, short-term seasonal shifts are less indicative of a pattern than the long-term reverberations of adversity. Strauss, Puccini, Janáček, Berg and Stravinsky bloomed in the years after World War I; Britten, Prokofiev and Menotti in the wake of World War II.

Peggy Monastra, director of promotions for music publisher G. Schirmer, says that "after the downturn a lot of companies found ways to do things that would keep an audience's attention and get them not to leave the house." Norman Ryan, vice president for composers and repertoire at Schott Music Corporation and European American Distributors, saw the economic downturn of 2008 as a positive inflection point. "There was so much entrepreneurial activity that grew out of the recession, with composers and performers getting out of school and looking around and not getting orchestra jobs or cast in major roles, that they just said 'We are going to take this upon ourselves and make things happen.'"

"When the economy is tight, opera companies look for new works," says Judith Illika, director of promotion at music publisher Theodore Presser Company. "*Aida* is expensive, but a lot of contemporary operas are cheaper to produce because they are frequently smaller casts, many do not have chorus and are contemporary in costume. It doesn't require all those brocades."

James Robinson, noted for his energetic commitment to new work, has also achieved recognition in the opera community for creating models of sustainability through cost-effective productions. His well-regarded 2004 production of *Nixon in China* was conceived on a scale that made it easily re-mounted by smaller companies lacking the wing space,

fly space or budgets to land a 747 on stage. The result was a proliferation of performances that has helped establish the work as a mainstay in heartland houses.

"It's a matter of thinking very far in advance about what the economics of it are," he says. "You have to find a way of adapting. The hardest thing is when people say, 'It's a great production, we want to do it, but it's not going to fit in our theater.' And retrofitting is always more expensive. The necessity of designing for theater is aesthetic, but a lot of it is economical." He notes that since the economic meltdown companies have been much more cautious of scale and more eager to embrace technological solutions, such as video and projections, which, he says have become increasingly sophisticated and reliable.

On the musical line item, Heggie says that when writing *Dead Man Walking* he was concerned that the size of the work might inhibit future performances. To his surprise, it gained traction quickly and has been adapted to companies of varying budgets. "I was of the mindset of writing smaller chamber operas, but the reality is they don't get produced as much," he says. "When people think opera they think 'big.' They are looking for pieces that are theatrical, have sound dramaturgy and use all of the traditional opera resources."

Reduced orchestrations have, however, extended the reach of contemporary works. **Boston Lyric Opera** recently

premiered a chamber version of the late Jack Beeson's *Lizzie Borden*. With the approval of the Beeson estate and his publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, the orchestration was chopped from 64 to 17 instruments. Composer Lowell Liebermann reduced *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to accommodate Philadelphia's **Center City Opera**. The opera had been premiered by the Monte Carlo Opera in 1996 with 74 musicians and given its U.S. premiere in 1999 at **Florentine Opera** in Milwaukee on a similarly grand scale. "The reaction from everyone who is familiar with the work is that the reduced version is just as effective," Liebermann says, in part because the weight was removed from orchestral interludes, rather than from vocal lines, which by their very nature had been sparingly underscored. He points to John Corigliano's reduced version of *The Ghost of Versailles* as another example of an uncompromising adaptation that has broadened opportunities for performances of a challenging contemporary work. The axe, however, is not a Maslovian



Lee Gregory as Jensen and Hana Park as Soo-Yun in HGOco's world premiere production of Jeeyoung Kim's *From my Mother's Mother*. Photo by Felix Sanchez.

hammer: "If you took *Elektra* and cut that down to 16 players you might lose something," Liebermann says.

If directors, designers and composers are bringing a deft touch to the microeconomics of opera, there are some highly visible hands driving macroeconomic growth: The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has been lauded for its transformative financial support of incubation, and OPERA America has received kudos for its New Works Forums and granting initiatives. Such funding and encouragement add healthy pressure to the pipeline. Says David Gockely, the result is that "there are a lot of people writing operas and a lot of people with ideas about operas: little operas, middle-size operas, big operas. And these ideas get presented to people like me, and the more people that are pressing us to do new pieces the more likely they are to be produced."

NEW VOICES, NEW AUDIENCES

That today's young composers self-identify as opera composers is itself a significant shift from the previous generation, when John Harbison (*The Great Gatsby*), John Corigliano (*The Ghosts of Versailles*), and Stephen Paulus (*The Postman Always Rings Twice*) didn't tackle (or weren't commissioned for) major operatic works until well after their reputations as instrumental and vocal composers were established. Not since the 19th century have composers had the conviction, or the climate, in which to plant their stake squarely in the field.

Which doesn't mean all composers are equipped to send their scores over the transom. "Most composers prototypically want to write an opera," says Richard Kessler, dean of the Mannes College of Music. "The big issue for opera in the grand style is in training and preparing and developing composers. Conservatories are not structured that way. Opera is seen in the post-graduate realm." Indeed, Kessler says few of today's leading conservatory composition professors have even written major operas. And that may not be a bad thing, according to Gockley, who observes that most of today's leading opera composers "have not indentured themselves to academia, which was sometimes prejudicial to their work in the popular realm because they had to conform to a stylistic and formal way of doing things."

The abundant supply of those who wish to write opera is increasingly balanced by a healthy demand by those

who would listen: "There is definitely a renewed interest in creating new works," says James Robinson, "but there is also a renewed interest from audiences." He was pleasantly surprised by the box office success and roaring ovations that greeted *Champion*, a financial knock-out that reached a new audience. "It was an entry point for people coming to the opera for the first time," he says.

Charles MacKay was similar pleased with the popularity of *Oscar* at Santa Fe. Its five performances sold at 97% of capacity, neck-and-neck with the war horses. "In the last 10 years we've really seen a shift in recognizing that the standard works to do not guarantee full houses," says MacKay. "For decades we have functioned under the assumption that if you are doing *La bohème* and *Madame Butterfly* and *Carmen* you could pretty much count on a full house, and that enabled you to take the risk on newer works. But what we've seen is those newer works can serve to draw not just new audiences but

traditional audiences who may be weary of seeing the top 10 standards."

Judith Ilicka, agrees that "a lot of those graying audiences are people who have already seen traditional repertoire and want to see something new." But, she says, "you cannot make assumptions based on age. New audiences may respond to something and work backwards to appreciate Mozart and Verdi."

At the fulcrum of the new music market are the music publishers, who as co-owners of copyrights for the

composers they represent have a vested interest not just in facilitating commissions and premieres, but in cultivating future performances as well. "The publishing community almost died 30 years ago and now it is robust again," says Gockley. Venerable houses such as G. Schirmer, Schott, Boosey & Hawkes, Theodore Presser and Peer Music have survived mergers and acquisitions and the evaporation of the once-lucrative print market.

They remain fierce advocates for their composers, leveraging the power of digital technology and traditional kibitzing to influence decision-makers and thought-leaders in the field. They are out in the field listening for talent (Todd Vunderink, director of Peermusic Classical, brought Mohammed Fairouz into the fold after hearing the premiere of *Sumeida's Song* at the PROTOTYPE Festival) and matchmaking composers with librettists ("We rack our brains and do a lot of reading," says Zizi Mueller, president of Boosey & Hawkes).



Victor Ryan Robertson as Benny "The Kid" Paret, Aubrey Allicock as Young Emile Griffith, Arthur Woodley as Emile Griffith, Robert Orth as Howie Albert and members of the company in Opera Theatre of Saint Louis' 2013 world premiere of Terence Blanchard's *Champion*. Photo by Ken Howard.

Though the margins are slim and the profits modest, publishing is still a business for which opera is an essential source of revenue. “My publisher colleagues are a great group of people,” says Mueller. “We all get along. We are all good friends. And of course we are in competition. If the Met or Opera Philadelphia or Boston Lyric is commissioning we hope it’s one of our composers. It’s the nature of the game, but it’s certainly a healthy competition.”

The most critical concern of publishers, who think in terms of decades rather than seasons, is getting follow-up performances. Monastra is seeing notable works from mid-career American composers come into the canon and, she says, “to have big works produced in big ways without them having to be a premiere is a trend that as a publisher makes me happy.” Subsequent performances of new works via co-commission are also an established pattern, though Monastra says co-commissioning can be a “blessing and a curse.” She often finds dance cards full. Even the venerable David Gockley says he gets rebuffed:

“With more companies doing their own works it’s less possible to get consortia together.”

Getting subsequent productions of solo commissions is a chronic source of angst for composers and librettists for whom the rushed experience of workshops, rehearsals and opening nights of full-scale premieres don’t afford the opportunity for corrections and improvements. Despite the best dramaturgy, words and music crafted in the studio may fail to advance a

key moment of the narrative, and a wrong turn can confuse even the most rapt audience. Orchestral passages may need tightening. A note just outside the soprano’s tessitura, once removed, may release tension that detracts from a moment of reverie. A piece of stage business that drew howls of laughter from insiders falls flat in front of paying audiences.

That frustration is shared by directors, as well. “When you work on a new play or musical you usually get to do it out of town or you might workshop it at a summer festival before you bring it into New York,” says Kevin Newbury. “It gives you a chance to retool it. But in opera you maybe get a workshop, hear it once, then open in front the world’s press.” Among Newbury’s reprises this year is a production of Marvin David Levy’s *Mourning Becomes Electra* for **Florida Grand Opera**. Commissioned and premiered by the Met in 1967, which presented additional performances the following season, the work languished for three decades until a 1998 revised version

presented by **Lyric Opera of Chicago**, and then by **Seattle Opera** in 2003.

MAKING OUR GARDEN GROW

To sustain this flourishing of American opera, there is continuing work to be done: nurturing collaborations among composers and librettists, creating showcases for directors and designers, reducing the financial risk of mounting new works and cultivating audiences who engage opera as a perennial event. Opera companies have partnered with other arts enterprises — museums, theaters, orchestras — as well as with each other: coalitions of smaller and emerging companies within given communities, such as the New York Opera Alliance (NYOA), offer additional channels for increasing visibility and viability without compromising their unique identities. Founded under the aegis of OPERA America, NYOA provides basic infrastructure, such as an integrated online calendar, as well as access to the resources

of the National Opera Center that may not have been affordable to fledgling companies and emerging independent producers.

Such continued evolution of process is essential, but so is continued hybridization of form. “We need to start thinking in different terms,” says MacKay. “We don’t always need to have specific labels: ‘workshop,’ ‘premiere,’ ‘revised.’” Says Aucoin, “To venture a prediction, I think that in my generation there will be a wider range

in how we define opera in musical terms, the range of musical influences we draw on, and the scale on which we realize the works.”

Of course, quantity does not necessarily mean enduring quality. What ultimately survives is that which pleases the diverse palates of composers, audiences, performers. But there is strength in numbers. Says Jake Heggie, “The only way the art form is really going to proceed to next level is when a great number of works are introduced. From that field of work perhaps one or two or three will rise above.” What becomes a legend cannot be derived from prediction, but only from a fertile present that sows the seeds of posterity. ■



Susannah Biller as Selena, Patricia Racette in the title role and Maria Kanyova as Vera Donovan in San Francisco Opera’s world premiere production of Tobias Picker’s *Dolores Claiborne*. Photo by Cory Weaver/San Francisco Opera.

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

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OPA NEWS

SPACE TO CREATE: ELIZABETH AND JEAN-MARIE EVEILLARD VOCAL STUDIO



Jean-Marie and Elizabeth Eveillard. Photo by Tristan Cook.

In recognition of their generous support of the National Opera Center, a vocal studio has been named in honor of **Elizabeth** and **Jean-Marie Eveillard**. Elizabeth “Betty” Eveillard was a trustee of The Glimmerglass Festival from 2002 until 2011; she served in a variety of roles, including chair from 2006-2011. In February 2012, she received OPERA America’s National Opera Trustee Recognition Award and is an active member of the National Trustee Forum. During more than 30 years of experience in the investment banking industry, she attained the position of managing director at Lehman Brothers, PaineWebber and Bear Stearns. In May 2012, Ms. Eveillard was named the chair of the Board of Trustees of Smith College. She has served on the board of Dean’s Advisors and the Visiting Committee of the Harvard Business School where she earned her M.B.A. She also serves as a trustee of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. Jean-Marie Eveillard recently retired after a 40-year career as a portfolio manager. For over 28 years, he was the lead portfolio manager of the First Eagle Global Fund and of other First Eagle Funds, as well. He currently sits on the Board of the First Eagle Funds. He is a trustee of The Frick Collection and a professor of professional practice at the Heilbrunn Center at Columbia Business School. Mr. Eveillard was named Morningstar’s International Manager of the Year in 2001, and in 2003 received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Morningstar for building one of the most successful long-term records in the investment business. Mr. Eveillard graduated from HEC, the French business school.

OPENING THE DOORS TO THE OPERA CENTER

To celebrate the first anniversary of the National Opera Center, OPERA America hosted Neighborhood Opera Day on Sunday, September 29. The full day of free events for the public, presented in partnership with the Greenwich Village Chelsea Chamber of Commerce, was designed to celebrate the vibrant artistic creativity of the Opera Center's Chelsea environs and engage newcomers and opera enthusiasts throughout the New York metropolitan area. The schedule of events included "Pulling Your Punches," a stage combat demonstration and class; "Aria Jukebox," a presentation of operatic voice types with audience-selected arias for performance; a pub-style opera trivia game, with prizes provided by local vendors; and performances by artists from Chelsea Opera.

Neighborhood Opera Day attracted more than 60 new visitors to the Opera Center, including local vendors, residents, Chelsea Opera fans, members of the NYC Opera Meet-up group and students from Hudson County Community College.



Attendees participate in pub-style opera trivia. Photo by Patricia Kiernan Johnson.



Baritone Markus Beam performs a selection from Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. Photo by Audrey Saccone.



Stage combat demonstration given by Michael Jerome Johnson and Rod Kinter. Photo by Patricia Kiernan Johnson.

OA NEWS

NATIONAL OPERA WEEK 2013

To celebrate National Opera Week 2013, more than 125 companies, schools and organizations nationwide presented free, fun and educational events in their communities. Distinguished baritone Thomas Hampson served as honorary chairman of the annual event, which was held from October 25 to November 1. National Opera Week celebrates the vibrancy of opera in America today, and brings the inventiveness and excitement of opera to a national audience. Activities included flash opera events, open houses, online activities, lecture/demonstrations and performances.

“There is something quite magical about a night at the opera,” stated Hampson. “Those of you who already love the world of opera: bring your friends, bring your family. Those of you who are not quite sure you want to explore the world of opera: I promise you, you do. You will love it,” he continued. A brief welcome video from Hampson is available at operaamerica.org.

National Opera Week is coordinated by OPERA America, the national service organization for opera, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). “From behind-the-scenes tours to enlightening performance talks to Twitter contests and more, there is something for everyone during National Opera Week,” states Marc A. Scorca, president/CEO of OPERA America. “National Opera Week draws attention to the creativity and dynamism that propels our field today. We are proud to highlight this depth of opera activity across the United States.”



Young Voices, The Santa Fe Opera’s program for high school students, appeared in “pop-up” performances throughout Albuquerque. Photo by Kathleen Clawson.



Pensacola Opera at the Great Gulf Arts Festival in Pensacola, FL. Photo courtesy of Pensacola Opera.



Los Angeles Opera’s free public *Magic Flute* recital at One Colorado in Pasadena, CA. Photo by Jennifer Babcock.



Evan Adams (seated), Lilly Kanterman, Sydney Jones and Marissa Pineda, Ifabunmi Muhammad-Ojedele and Daniel Brevik in Opera Theatre of Saint Louis' 2013 production of *The Very Last Green Thing*. Photo by Peter Wochniak.



Parvan Bakardiev, Wichita Grand Opera general director, and staff giving out opera coloring books at Night of the Living Zoo. Photo courtesy of Wichita Grand Opera Staff.



The Lifespan of a Fly was the judges' choice in The Atlanta Opera's fourth annual 24-Hour Opera Project. Composed by Ronnie Reshef with a libretto by Vynnie Meli, *The Lifespan of a Fly* was performed by Sondra Collins, William Green and Ivan Segovia. Photo by Jeff Roffman for The Atlanta Opera.



Chad Sonka and Jonathan Tetelman performing for a Savannah V.O.I.C.E. Festival event at Windsor Forest High School. Photo by G. Konstantinidis.

OPERA FUND GRANTS AWARDED TO NINE COMPANIES

OPERA America awarded nine grants from *The Opera Fund* on November 21. The program provides technical and financial support to OPERA America's members to enhance the quality, quantity and creativity of new opera and music-theater, to develop a deeper and broader appreciation on the part of the general public for opera and music-theater companies, and to encourage creative artists who will write and interpret new works. Since the inception of *The Opera Fund*, grants of nearly \$13 million have been awarded in support of almost 100 new operas.

Panelists who participated in the selection process this year were mezzo-soprano Joyce Castle, librettist Michael Korie, composer John Musto, bass-baritone Eric Owens, composer Caroline Shaw and stage director Tazewell Thompson.

American Lyric Theater

JFK (working title)

by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek (\$40,000)

In November 2014, American Lyric Theater and Fort Worth Opera (FWO) will collaborate on a developmental workshop and public reading of the complete piano-vocal score of *JFK* (working title), a new opera by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek. *JFK* is a full-length opera being developed for the 70th anniversary season of FWO in the spring of 2016. Reflecting a significant moment in American history, the opera will tell the story of the lives and relationships of those connected to the 35th president of the United States, with a focus on their moments in Fort Worth the morning before his fateful trip to Dallas.

Beth Morrison Projects

Aging Magician by Paola Prestini and Rinde Eckert (\$45,000)

Aging Magician is a composite of sonic and visual elements that paints the fading world of a man approaching the end of his life. The man's vibrant final adventure is brought to life by a team of multi-disciplinary artists who combine music, theater, puppetry, instrument making and scenic design to create an enduring work for the stage. In partnership with VisionIntoArt, Beth Morrison Projects will use this grant to support a year-long residency at the Park Avenue Armory in Manhattan and later a technical residency at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art.

Houston Grand Opera

Kynaston by Carlisle Floyd (\$5,000)

Houston Grand Opera is commissioning a new work from Carlisle Floyd, titled *Kynaston*. Based on the stage play *Compleat Female Stage Beauty* by Jeffrey Hatcher, the opera tells the story of Edward Kynaston, the last of the boy players who filled women's roles onstage in Restoration-period England. The opera follows Kynaston's life from the height of his fame to his downfall after King Charles II's proclamation allowing women to appear onstage.

Lyric Opera of Chicago

Bel Canto by Jimmy Lopez and Nilo Cruz (\$25,000)

Lyric Opera of Chicago plans to hold five days of workshops over a two-week period in the summer of 2014. These workshops will involve the entire *Bel Canto* creative team, including composer Jimmy López and librettist Nilo Cruz, as well as creative consultant Renée Fleming, conductor Sir Andrew Davis and stage director Kevin Newbury. Adapted from the Ann Patchett novel of the same name, the work is inspired by the Lima Crisis of 1996-1997, when members of a revolutionary movement in Peru held hostages at the Japanese ambassador's house for 126 days. Central to the story is the fictional famed American soprano, Roxanne Coss. Like the novel, the opera will explore the tensions and unexpected alliances that develop when a group of culturally disparate strangers — the terrorists and their hostages — are confined in close quarters for months.

Metropolitan Opera

Blizzard on Marblehead Neck

by Jeanine Tesori and Tony Kushner (\$10,000)

The Metropolitan Opera plans to expand the one-act opera, *Blizzard on Marblehead Neck* by Jeanine Tesori and Tony Kushner, into a full-length, two-act opera. Originally premiered at The Glimmerglass Festival in August 2011, the work portrays a fight between an ailing Eugene O'Neill and his wife, Carlotta, during a raging snowstorm. Tesori and Kushner will further develop this story to encompass more elements of the couple's tempestuous relationship during the last years of O'Neill's life, as he faced the realization that he could not complete his final masterpieces.

Opera Philadelphia

Charlie Parker

by Daniel Schnyder and Bridgette Wimberly (\$40,000)

Charlie Parker is a co-commission and co-production of Opera Philadelphia and Gotham Chamber Opera, which will have its world premiere in June 2015 in Philadelphia. Written by composer Daniel Schnyder and librettist Bridgette Wimberly, the opera tells the story of legendary jazz saxophonist Charlie "Yardbird" Parker, who will be portrayed by American tenor Lawrence Brownlee.

Opera Theatre Saint Louis

Shalimar the Clown by Jack Perla and Rajiv Joseph (\$25,000)
Opera Theatre of Saint Louis has planned two week-long workshops in the Sally S. Levy Opera Center for *Shalimar the Clown*, written by Jack Perla and Rajiv Joseph. Based on the Salman Rushdie novel, the work will premiere in June 2016 as part of the company's spring festival season. Rushdie's novel was a finalist for the 2005 Whitbread Book Awards, and has been described as "Rushdie's greatest novel since *The Satanic Verses*" by the *Los Angeles Times*. The opera will tell a complex story of seduction, revenge, cultural clashes and shifting global politics.

San Francisco Opera

Dream of the Red Chamber by Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang (\$10,000)
San Francisco Opera has commissioned a new opera, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, from composer Bright Sheng and librettist David Henry Hwang to premiere in the fall of 2016. Based on

the Chinese novel of the same title, the company has planned a piano-vocal workshop in September 2015. In two acts, the opera unfolds within the red walls of the Grand Panorama Garden or Red Chamber. "Red Chamber" usually refers to a room where the daughter of a prominent family is sheltered.

Washington National Opera

An American Soldier
by Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang (\$25,000)
As part of the American Opera Initiative, Washington National Opera will workshop *An American Soldier* by Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang in March 2014. The work is based on the life of Danny Chen, a Chinese-American U.S. Army soldier who served in Afghanistan. A victim of racial slurs, verbal abuse and physical assaults from members of his own unit, Chen was found with gunshot wounds in a guard tower in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, and passed away soon after on October 3, 2011.

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OA NEWS

OPERA CONFERENCE 2013 SPONSORS

OPERA America acknowledges the generous contributions of the following businesses and corporations who sponsored events and sessions for *Opera Conference 2013: Opera Out of Bounds*, that was held in Vancouver, May 7-11, 2013.



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The advertisement features a violin and a masquerade mask on the left, and a woman in a black dress holding a white paper on the right. The background is a light, textured wall.

PUBLICATIONS

By Alexa B. Antopol



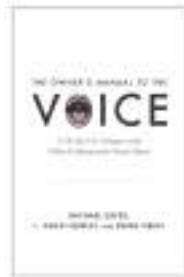
FROM THE SCORE TO THE STAGE: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL OPERA PRODUCTION AND STAGING

Evan Baker

Chicago University Press

Without scenery, costumes and stage action, an opera would be little more than a concert. But in the audience, we know little (and think less) about the enormous efforts of those involved in bringing an opera to life — by the stagehands who shift scenery, the scenic artists who create backdrops, the electricians who focus the spotlights, and the stage manager who calls them and the singers to their places during the performance. A comprehensive history of the behind-the-scenes world of opera production and staging, *From the Score to the Stage* follows the evolution of visual style and set design in continental Europe from its birth in the 17th century up to today. Evan Baker covers all the major players and pieces involved in getting an opera onto the stage, from the stage director who creates the artistic concept for the production and guides the singers' interpretation of their roles to the blocking of singers and placement of scenery. He concentrates on the people — composers, librettists, designers and technicians — as well as the theaters and events that generated developments in opera production. Additional topics include the many difficulties in performing an opera, the functions of impresarios and the

business of music publishing. Delving into history of stage directing, theater architecture and technology, and scenic and lighting design, Baker links these technical aspects of opera to actual performances and performers, and the social context in which they appeared. Out of these details arise illuminating discussions of individual productions that cast new light on the operas of Wagner, Verdi and others.



THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE VOICE: A GUIDE FOR SINGERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL VOICE USERS

Rachael Gates, L. Arick Forrest
and Kerrie Obert

Oxford University Press

Singers must equip themselves with enough knowledge to clearly convey specific sensations and difficulties with their instrument. Understanding of potential dangers and disorders, familiarity with a variety of medical procedures, and comprehension in various facets of diagnosis and treatments empower singers to “own,” just like other musicians, their instrument. *The Owner's Manual to the Voice* provides singers with the knowledge necessary to communicate effectively and in intelligent terms about their instrument, especially when conversing with medical professionals. Beginning with an overview of the vocal anatomy, the authors proceed through

detailed discussions of caring for the voice and common causes of vocal changes and problems before guiding the reader through the process of choosing, talking to and working with an ENT. In so doing, they give insights that any professional voice user — whether singer, actor, broadcaster, politician, teacher, preacher or lawyer — will find helpful if not essential.



BUILDING THE OPERATIC MUSEUM

William Gibbons

University of Rochester Press

Focusing on the operas of Mozart, Gluck and Rameau, *Building the Operatic Museum* examines the role that 18th-century works played in the opera houses of Paris around the turn of the 20th century. These works, mostly neglected during the 19th century, became the main exhibits in what William Gibbons calls the Operatic Museum — a physical and conceptual space in which great masterworks from the past and present could, like works of visual art in the Louvre, entertain audiences while educating them in their own history and national identity. Drawing on the fields of musicology, museum studies, art history and literature, Gibbons explores how this “museum” transformed Parisian musical theater into a place of cultural memory, dedicated to the display of French musical greatness.



THE SINGER'S GUIDE TO COMPLETE HEALTH

Anthony F. Jahn, MD, Ed.
Oxford University Press

Anthony F. Jahn, MD, otolaryngologist and director of medical services at the Metropolitan Opera, offers a comprehensive guidebook on a wide range of health and disorders that affect the voice. A vital tool for singers, voice teachers and choral directors, *The Singer's Guide to Complete Health* empowers vocal performers to take charge of their own bodies, providing advice about a variety of health issues that affect professional well-being, as well as remedies to the most important and common health problems that singers face in their careers. Dr. Jahn has invited a diverse group of health care specialists and music professionals to share their expertise and tips with singers and their teachers. The chapters cover a broad spectrum of topics, including not only vocal issues, but also general physical and psychological well-being, diet and exercise. Each chapter provides a clear explanation of an aspect of health of practical relevance to vocalists. The book enables singers to make informed decisions about their own health, and gives guidance on seeking appropriate professional help and self-remedies.



OMBRA: SUPERNATURAL MUSIC IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Clive McClelland
Lexington Books

Ombra is the term which applies to an operatic scene involving the appearance of an oracle, demon, witch or ghost. Such scenes can be traced back to the early days of opera and were commonplace in the 17th century in Italy and France. Operas based on the legends of Orpheus, Iphigenia and Alcestis provide numerous examples of ombra and extend well into the 18th century. This volume is an in-depth examination of ombra and its many influences on classical music performance. Clive McClelland reveals that ombra scenes proved popular with audiences not only because of the special stage effects employed, but also due to increasing use of awe-inspiring musical effects. By the end of the 18th century the scenes had come to be associated with an elaborate set of musical features including slow, sustained writing, the use of flat keys, angular melodic lines, chromaticism and dissonance, dotted rhythms and syncopation, tremolando effects, unexpected harmonic progressions and unusual instrumentation, especially involving trombones. It is clearly distinct from other styles that exhibit some of these characteristics, such as the so-called "Sturm und Drang" or "Fantasia." Furthermore, parallels can be drawn between these features and Edmund Burke's "sublime of terror," thus placing ombra music on an important position in the context of 18th-century aesthetic theory.

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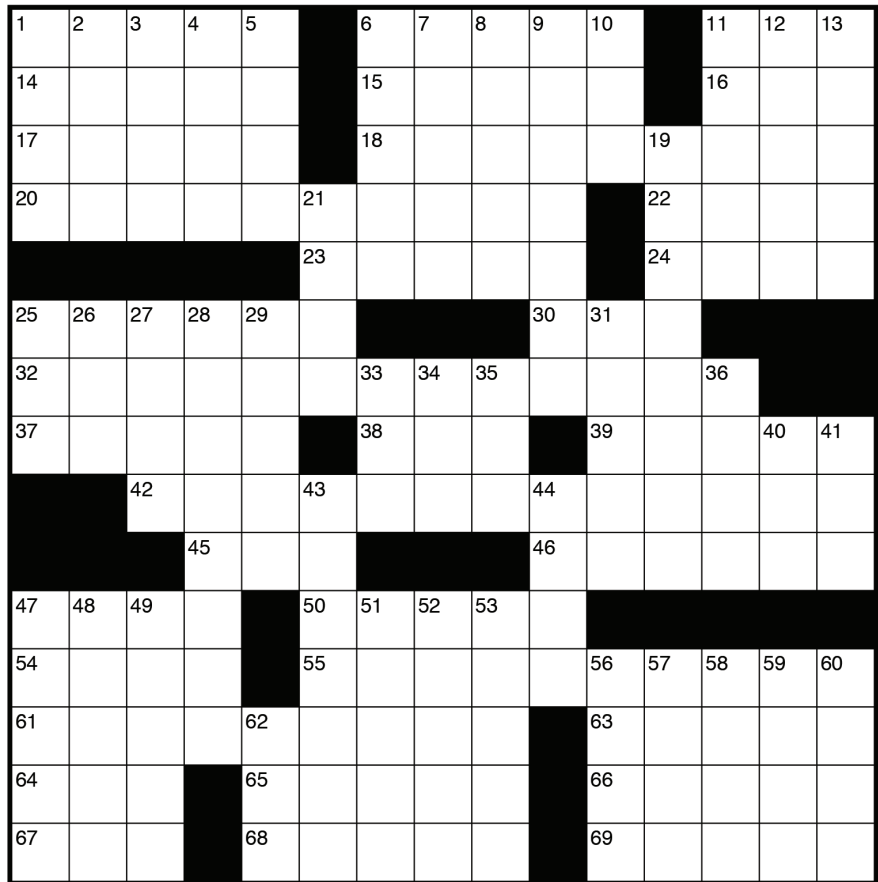
CROSSWORD

By David J. Kahn

ACROSS

- 1 "V'ho ingannato" singer
 6 Oversimplifies, with "down"
 11 Brio
 14 *Life With an ___* (Schnittke opera)
 15 Critic who wrote *Awake in the Dark*
 16 Approaching ___ (2013 WNO premiere)
 17 Point (to)
 18 Opera by 42-Across whose premiere was conducted by Liszt
 20 Opera by 32-Across based on a Dumas play
 22 Legendary Swiss hotelier
 23 Bother
 24 On deck, maybe
 25 Don't believe it!
 30 Dearie
 32 Composer whose bicentennial was celebrated in 2013
 37 Basso who made his operatic debut in 61-Across
 38 ___ chi
 39 Kiri Te Kanawa, in part
 42 Composer whose bicentennial was celebrated in 2013
 45 Lobsters to-be
 46 Jitters
 47 Scourge
 50 Con men?
 54 Taking care of business
 55 Opera by 42-Across, the source of music in the cartoon *What's Opera, Doc?*

- 61 Opera by 32-Across whose 2013 Met production was set in Las Vegas
 63 Bolena and Reich
 64 It's like -like
 65 Flaw on a diamond?
 66 "Finished!"
 67 Opera piece?
 68 In harmony
 69 Made off with



DOWN

- 1 Lang's *The Little Match ___ Passion*
 2 Think about it
 3 Pick-me-up
 4 Factotum, like Figaro
 5 Gillette brand
 6 Paolo's beloved, in *Fosca*
 7 W.W. II menace
 8 Either of classical music's "Z" brothers
 9 Partner of live
 10 Boarding place: Abbr.
 11 Setting of *Andrea Chénier*
 12 Beautiful people
 13 *South Pacific* basso
 19 Theatre and opera director Michael
 21 HBO comedy series
 25 Classic sports cars
 26 *Richard ___* (Giorgio Battistelli work)
 27 Sorry soul
 28 Seek
 29 "Do woodchucks chuck wood?" advertiser

- 31 TV financial adviser
 33 Class-conscious grp.?
 34 Musical talent
 35 YouTube clip, for short
 36 Hebrides isle
 40 Caesar's thing
 41 Birthplace of Colm Wilkinson: Abbr.
 43 Plunges
 44 Paul Newman flop about a radio station
 47 Basso Christoff
 48 Flavor similar to fennel
 49 Opening ___ gala (opera tradition)
 51 Hot rod propellant
 52 "Grand" site
 53 *Love, Loss and What ___* (Off-Broadway play)
 56 Buckos
 57 Join together
 58 Reverse
 59 Local support?
 60 *Parisina d' ___* (Donizetti opera)
 62 Idyllic setting

Contest rules: Completed puzzles must be received by Midnight on January 15 via mail, fax (212.796.8621) or e-mail attachment (Editor@operaamerica.org). Please include your name, e-mail address and daytime phone number. A winner will be chosen by drawing from among correct answers. The winner will receive an OPERA America gift.

David J. Kahn is a nationally-known crossword puzzle maker and opera aficionado whose puzzles have appeared in The New York Times. He is the author of The Metropolitan Opera: Crosswords for Opera Lovers.

MEMBERS FEATURED

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FALL 2013 CROSSWORD SOLUTION

S	A	A	B		C	O	O	L	I	T		C	O	D		
O	S	L	O		I	M	F	I	N	E		A	N	I		
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S	E	M			A	N	A	D	E	M			R	I	P	E

The winner of the Fall *Opera America* Magazine crossword contest was Randall Eng, assistant arts professor and resident composer at New York University's M.F.A. Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program. His opera *Florida*, written with librettist Donna DiNovelli, has been performed at Lyric Opera Cleveland, New York City Opera's VOX festival and the Public Theater's New Work Now! festival. His opera *Henry's Wife*, libretto by Alexis Bernier, has been developed at the Virginia Arts Festival, the Manhattan School of Music, the Center for Contemporary Opera and American Opera Projects. A Staten Island native and *Jeopardy!* champion, he lives in New York.

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MY FIRST TIME

Fred Simon



When I was a child the most important musical instrument in our home was the Victrola, and it was from our collection of 78s that I was first exposed to the great voices of the time. Those recordings nurtured a lifelong love of singing and of opera that endures to this day.

One could say that my first exposure to live opera performance was in high school, when I played the role of the Captain in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. By the time I went off to college at the University of Pennsylvania, I was an avid singer. I joined the men's glee club, singing tenor and the occasional solo. During my summer break in 1957, I traveled to Europe and it was there, at the Opéra Comique in Paris, that I went to my first professional opera performance. It was *La bohème* and it was love at first sight. I knew then that there was no better way to find great singing than at the opera.

When I returned to Penn, I took music courses and began attending the opera regularly. (I was even a supernumerary now and then!) At the time, there were two opera companies in Philadelphia: the Philadelphia Grand Opera and the Philadelphia Lyric Opera (which have since merged into the company we now know as **Opera Philadelphia**), and the Met came to town every other Tuesday night. The Academy of Music, where the operas were performed, became a second home to me.

When I graduated and returned to my hometown of Omaha to join the family business, Omaha Steaks, I began attending **Opera Omaha**, which had only just been started a few years previously. It began as a non-professional company and was sustained by the devotion of dedicated volunteers. I became a member of the board in 1966 and have been involved with Opera Omaha ever since. I suppose I could have sung in the chorus from time to time, but I was very busy building our business. And I think it was better that I gave the opera money and spared them my talent.

In those early years, fundraising was an enormous challenge. I can remember times I was out begging for the opera just to make sure we could make the payroll. After we were more established, we were able to implement a continuous process of cultivation and leadership. We would earmark certain people, invite them to performances, and convert them to generous supporters and board members. It certainly helps that Omaha itself has become a city of great wealth.

Although Omaha is my home, my love of opera has expanded over the years to other companies, as well. I serve on the board of directors of **The Santa Fe Opera** and the National Patrons Council of **Opera Theatre of Saint Louis** and have been a regular supporter of the **Metropolitan Opera** for many years. I have also served on and led several local and state arts boards. I believe strongly that the arts are under-funded and under-served, and I have taken it as a personal obligation to elevate their importance not just in Omaha but across the state of Nebraska.

Opera is deep in my heart, and I am fortunate that it is a great love that my wife, Eve, and I share together. Eve speaks Italian and is versatile in French, and we will go to just about anything, though we particularly enjoy realistic theatrical interpretations. We like it well-directed and well-performed in every way, and even if we don't like the production, we always appreciate the experience and are willing to try the next new thing. We also travel a lot to see opera, often with groups from Omaha, Saint Louis and Santa Fe. We have been to 730 performances in 39 years of marriage.

How do I know that? For decades I have kept a database of the performances I have attended: the company, the title, the director, the singers and my notes about the experience. I began when I was young by collecting programs, but as they consumed the bookcases of my home I designed a program in Microsoft Access. I hired a music student from the University of Nebraska in Omaha to enter the first 350 productions and I have carried on after that one at a time. Sometimes my wife will ask, "When did we see Domingo in such and such an opera?" I go to my database, input his name, and wonderful memories return of the performance, the production or the people we were with. It is in many ways my own personal musical instrument.

Years ago at Opera Omaha, I used to practically live in the rehearsal hall. It was and remains a great joy to be backstage and a pleasure to befriend the people we meet and the singers we hear. Eve and I always appreciate how hard they work to put on a good show.

And yes, I've been known to send them Omaha Steaks as a way of saying thank you.

Fred Simon is executive vice president and fourth-generation family owner of Omaha Steaks, the nation's largest direct marketer of steaks and gourmet foods.

New Operas from SCHOTT/EAM



Kamran Ince

Judgment of Midas

OPERA America New Works Forum | January 14, 2014

Loosely based on Ovid's mythical drama *Metamorphoses* with a libretto by Miriam Seidel, *Judgment of Midas* details the epic musical battle between the gods Pan and Apollo.

Premiere: Present Music, April 12, 2013

Gregory Spears Paul's Case

Based on the story by Willa Cather, Gregory Spears' chamber opera *Paul's Case* explores the defiant and fragile sides of a young outcast with an arresting score that superimposes post-minimal and Baroque styles.

Premiere: UrbanaArts, April 20, 2013

Upcoming Productions: PROTOTYPE Festival, January 8-13, 2014
Pittsburgh Opera, Feb 22 - Mar 8, 2014



Christopher Cerrone Invisible Cities

"A startlingly ambitious project" that "could be, and should be, done anywhere." Christopher Cerrone's *Invisible Cities* is based on Italo Calvino's novel and explores Marco Polo's travels to lands, both real and imaginary, through conversation with Kublai Khan.

Premiere: The Industry & LA Dance Project, October 19, 2013



Tobias Picker Dolores Claiborne

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

Premiere: San Francisco Opera, September 18, 2013



George Benjamin Written on Skin

George Benjamin's acclaimed new opera has been called "impeccable," "complexly beautiful," and "the work of a genius unleashed." *Written on Skin* features an original libretto by Martin Crimp and was premiered at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence.

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



Also recently premiered:

Gavin Bryars, *Marilyn Forever*

Aventa Ensemble, September 13, 2013

Douglas J. Cuomo, *Doubt*

Minnesota Opera, January 26, 2013

Gerald Barry, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Los Angeles Philharmonic, April 7, 2011 (concert)

Opéra National de Lorraine, March 17, 2013 (staged)

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