

OPERA CONFERENCE 2012 PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

Opening Keynote Address. **Douglas McLennan** helped change the ways people get their news about arts and culture, first as music critic and columnist for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and then as founder and editor of *ArtsJournal*, one of the first websites to aggregate arts and cultural news from around the world. Since its founding in 1999, *ArtsJournal* has grown to become home to more than 60 prominent arts bloggers and a place for important debate and discussion about cultural issues. In this keynote address, McLennan shares his insights and recommends ways for opera leaders to expand their definitions of excellence beyond the performance. His strategies for re-energizing arts organizations suggest that opera companies embrace a new set of skills and behaviors that increase the potential of reaching new audiences interested in an experience that extends beyond the arts event. His remarks will reflect on demonstrated success in opera and challenge all stakeholders to think more broadly about the dynamics of resurgence.

Sessions and Seminars. **General sessions** bring together the entire conference constituency to explore topics that affect all aspects of the opera field. These sessions include “The Real Work: Innovation and Resilience in a New Era for the Arts” led by **Richard Evans**, president of EmcArts and a national expert on organizational innovation; a conversation with **Michael Kaiser**, president of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and long-time strategy consultant; “Choice and Change,” a panel discussion on creative approaches to dealing with economic challenges and social change; and a collaborative working group session called “Choice, Change and the Creative Resurgence” where conference attendees chart the future of a fictional opera company to transform it into a more vibrant and financially viable organization.

More than two dozen **open sessions** will be offered during the course of *Opera Conference 2012*, addressing the needs of staff, trustees, volunteers and other industry professionals in the areas of artistic and artist training, management, development, finance, marketing, public relations, volunteerism and technical/production. Among these sessions are:

- Raise the Roof: New Opportunities from New Facilities
- Is Dynamic Pricing Right for Your Organization?
- It Takes Two to Tango: Successful Partnerships Between Performing Companies and Support Groups
- Building Board Diversity
- A Mile in Their Shoes: Cross-Company Exchanges

Full-day **seminars** have been crafted to provide concentrated, expert advice and tools to help industry professionals thrive in vital areas. *Opera Conference 2012* seminars cover topics such as:

- Mainstage to New Media: Capture and Use of Artistic Product
- Negotiation and Influence Seminar
- Online Fundraising Seminar
- Creative Aging: Opera and Older Adults

Closing Keynote Remarks. Composer **Jennifer Higdon** delivers the closing keynote address and reminds attendees of the reason for attending the opera conference and committing to a career in opera administration: the creation of art, above all else. A graduate of Philadelphia’s Curtis Institute, Higdon’s Violin Concerto won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Music, and her Percussion Concerto won the 2010 GRAMMY Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition. She is currently experiencing her first creative process in the world of opera — composing an opera based on Charles Frazier’s best-selling novel, *Cold Mountain*. A co-commission between The Santa Fe Opera and Opera Company of Philadelphia, the work will receive its world premiere in 2015.

Artist Intensive. Leading opera artists and administrators provide vital career advice at this workshop featuring feedback auditions, portfolio reviews and one-on-one mentoring sessions with industry experts, as well as panel discussions and presentations on a variety of professional development topics for artists at all stages of career advancement. Artist Intensive experts include **Susan Shiplett Ashbaker**, Rider

University; **Ken Benson**, Marcello Giordani Foundation; **Garnett Bruce**, stage director; **Thor Eckert**, Academy of Vocal Arts; **Cori Ellison**, dramaturg; **Jeanne Goffi-Fynne**, Columbia University; **Beth Greenberg**, stage director; **Richard Harrell**, San Francisco Conservatory; **Jennifer Higdon**, composer; **Don Mrazo**, Astral Artists; **Erhard Rom**, set designer; **Arlene Shrut**, New Triad for Collaborative Arts; **David Walker**, Sarasota Opera; and **Darren K. Woods**, Fort Worth Opera.

Chamber Opera Focus. Throughout the conference, a series of thematic sessions will investigate the practice of smaller-scale productions. Recent opera seasons have included a number of smaller works, frequently in alternative venues, in place of — and in addition to — works from the standard repertoire of grand operas. Many companies have found new artistic excitement and financial success in projects that were, at first, conceived as cost-containment strategies. This series is made possible with special support from Opera Company of Philadelphia.

New Works Forum. Following up on its inaugural convening in November 2011, the New Works Forum nurtures more informed producers and creators while establishing stronger relationships among them. Attendance is limited.

Leadership Advance. The Leadership Advance will provide the most promising emerging leaders in the field of opera administration with the skills and contacts needed to advance to an executive level position. This workshop and breakfast seminar series will help participants develop their personal leadership styles while gaining skills in strategic planning, staff development, board relations, and financial and artistic planning.

Singer Training Forum. The Singer Training Forum is comprised of stakeholders in the field of opera (including voice teachers, young artist program managers, opera company administrators and artist managers, among others) who are dedicated to the identification and development of aspiring singers. During this meeting, attendees will discuss ideas for reaching the next generation of young singers and ways for introducing high school students to the training process for opera.

New Works Sampler. The New Works Sampler, a showcase of works-in-progress and recent premieres, has become an important part of OPERA America's annual conference. On Wednesday, June 13, artists from a number of organizations will perform a selection of works in Lenfest Hall at Curtis Institute of Music. Performances include:

- *La Reina* by Jorge Sosa & Laura Sosa (American Lyric Theater)
- *Oceanic Verses* by Paola Prestini & Donna di Novelli (Beth Morrison Projects)
- *Oscar* by Theo Morrison & John Cox (Opera Company of Philadelphia & The Santa Fe Opera)
- *Cecilio Valdes, King of Havana* by Paquito D'Rivera, Enrique Del Risco & Alexis Romay (Boosey & Hawkes)
- *Love/Hate* by Jack Perla & Rob Bailis (American Opera Projects)

Opera Performances. *Opera Conference 2012* attendees have the opportunity to attend productions by Opera Company of Philadelphia and Center City Opera Theater.

***Dark Sisters* at Opera Company of Philadelphia**

Opera Company of Philadelphia has partnered New York City's Gotham Chamber Opera and Music-Theatre Group in the co-commission and co-production of *Dark Sisters*, a new American opera with music by Nico Muhly and a libretto by Stephen Karam. The opera follows one woman's dangerous attempt to escape her life as a member of the FLDS Church (Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), a sect that split from mainstream Mormonism in the early 20th century. Set against a red-earthed landscape filled with revelations, dark prophets and white temples stretching towards heaven, *Dark Sisters* charts one woman's quest for self-discovery in a world where personal identity is forbidden. An incredible ensemble of strong female stars headline the production, led by Caitlyn Lynch as Eliza, the conflicted central wife, and starring Jennifer Zetlan, Eve Gigliotti, Margaret Lattimore and Jennifer Check. Award-winning Broadway director Rebecca Taichman stages this new work, with Gotham Chamber Opera's music director, Neal Goren, conducting.

***Slaying the Dragon* at Center City Opera Theater**

Although opera classics are sometimes updated and re-conceived to appeal to newer audiences, only new operas can truly engage us in meaningful dialogue regarding current social conflicts. *Slaying the Dragon* will test the waters of intolerance in its June premiere in Philadelphia, presented by Center City Opera Theater. Based on a true story depicted in the book *Not by the Sword* by Kathryn Watterson, *Slaying the Dragon* is about a Grand Dragon of the KKK, who in the 1990s renounced violence and hatred because of his unlikely friendship with a rabbi. The opera is about atonement, forgiveness and redemption; through their relationship, both men undergo personal transformations and break from the prisons of their dark pasts. *Slaying the Dragon* is the latest work to emerge from Center City Opera Theater's Creative Development Projects, an ongoing series of new opera works that are nurtured from inceptions to fully-staged premieres.

Special Offer for Philadelphians. OPERA America has tailored a special conference package of events for patrons, trustees and staff. For just \$95, the package provides access to five conference sessions featuring some of the most influential arts leaders which address vital issues affecting the entire arts industry, such as engaging new audiences, creating meaningful community relationships, rethinking traditional leadership practices and fostering artistic creativity. For more information and to register, visit www.operaamerica.org/specialoffer.