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OPERA AMERICA

FALL 2015

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THE COVER

Lyric Opera of Kansas City's summer camp performance of *Carmen* shows the power of opera to educate and inspire. Photo by Karen Almond for Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

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

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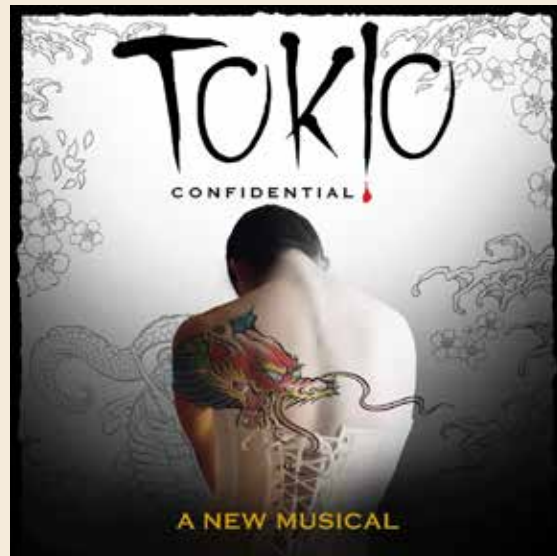
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A SEASON OF INNOVATION



Labor Day was late this year, leaving many of us to gasp at the sudden arrival of the full-throttle fall opera season, even as we were still reflecting on how a full summer of performances will inform our work throughout the coming year.

Summer festivals now make opera a year-round force in American culture, and they continue to inspire. Premieres and performances of rarely heard repertoire are now frequent occurrences, adding to the intense, immersive experiences such destination events offer. Indeed, the special experience of concentrated performances is leading other companies to transition from traditional seasonal schedules to festival formats. The benefits can be many, including increased media attention and public focus. While most companies will maintain the extended season model, we can learn how to translate some of the most appealing qualities of festivals into traditional seasons. Every opera house should be a thrilling destination and every performance an immersion, no matter what the season.

This past summer, as I mentioned in my previous letter, we facilitated a meeting of artistic and production leaders in Charlotte, hosted by Opera Carolina and supported by the Knight Foundation, that fostered a new rubric of “collaborative production” to embrace a variety of partnerships that can rebalance our commitment to excellence and creativity across the entire canon, from contemporary American works to the standard repertoire. Another meeting, held in June in San Francisco, inaugurated OPERA America’s Civic Action Group, a cohort of company leaders that helped us define objectives for deeper public service and develop a vocabulary that describes this work in terms that are appropriate for opera.

We in the United States are not alone in addressing issues of collaboration and civic engagement. Canadian members of OPERA America discussed both topics in the course of the 2015 Banff Opera Colloquium convened by Opera.ca in July. These and other familiar subjects, including professional development for artists and staff, will also be addressed at Opera Europa’s fall meeting in Bucharest. How appropriate that OPERA America’s *Opera Conference 2016*, with its theme of “Global Strategies, Local Actions,” will be held in the multinational city of Montréal, from May 18 to 21, and will deepen our appreciation that success in building public value for opera and opera companies may be unified by a shared vision, yet be “personal” in local application.

Here at the National Opera Center, our role as convener, presenter and host can be immersive, too! Throughout the fall and winter months, the annual Forums for Trustees and leaders in Education, Marketing and Public Relations, Singer Training, Technical and Production, and Finance will be underway. The *Onstage at the Opera Center* season features interviews and performances with some of today’s most celebrated vocal artists, conductors and composers — streamed live to a global audience. We are particularly honored to present a five-part interview series on the creative process with Carlisle Floyd, the legendary 89-year-old composer-librettist, whose latest work, *Prince of Players*, will receive its world premiere by Houston Grand Opera in March.

And our rehearsal spaces are booked heavily for auditions, recordings and readings of new works. We look forward to seeing you throughout the year and hope you will avail yourselves fully of all the resources OPERA America offers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc A. Scorca". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO

KATE RAINES



The ensemble of Opera Philadelphia's world premiere *ANDY: A Popera* by Dan Visconti, Heath Allen, John Jarboe and Sean Lally. Scenic design by Oona Curley, costume design by Rebecca Kanach and lighting design by Mike Inwood.

SEASON PREMIERES AND HIGHLIGHTS

Pop art took center stage on September 10 when **OPERA PHILADELPHIA** and Bearded Ladies Cabaret staged the world premiere of *ANDY: A Popera*, by composers Heath Allen and Dan Visconti with a libretto by John Jarboe. In February, the company will present the East Coast premiere of *Cold Mountain*, by Jennifer Higdon and Gene Scheer, of which it served as co-producer.

Plácido Domingo switched roles at intermission for the double bill that opened **LOS ANGELES OPERA**'s season on September 12: He sang the starring role of *Gianni Schicchi* in a production directed by Woody Allen and then took up the baton to conduct Franco Zeffirelli's production of *Pagliacci*. The LA Opera season also includes Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *Moby-Dick*, Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *Songs from the Uproar*, and *Norma* starring Angela Meade and Jamie Barton.

Rare works from two titans were staged in September: Massenet's *Le Cid*, an 1885 work composed between *Manon* and *Werther*, received a concert performance on the 18th by Boston's **ODYSSEY OPERA**, while Mozart's *Lucio Silla*, written when the composer was 16, opened **CHICAGO OPERA THEATER**'s season on September 26.

Le nozze di Figaro launched **LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO**'s season in a production directed by Barbara Gaines, artistic director of Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Also in Lyric's lineup: a new production

of *Wozzeck*, directed by David McVicar, and the world premiere of *Bel Canto*, with music by Jimmy López and a libretto by Nilo Cruz.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA raised the curtain on *Luisa Miller* for its opening night. The 10-production season includes a new production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the David McVicar production of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, a staging of Bizet's *Carmen* by Calixto Bieito, and the American premiere of a Gordon Getty-Claude Debussy double bill based on Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

Now in its ninth season, Boston's **GUERRILLA OPERA** premiered *Troubled Water* by Mischa Salkind-Pearl and Frederick Choi in September. *Beowulf* by Hannah Lash opens in May. The company



Composer Jack Heggie and librettist Terrence McNally at the 2014 Opera Fusion workshop of their opera *Great Scott*, to be premiered this fall at The Dallas Opera.

will also engage in an artistic residency with New Music Brandeis.

BOSTON LYRIC OPERA's production of *La bohème* in October will be reimaged against the backdrop of the 1968 Paris student revolution. Rosetta Cucchi directs. The following month, BLO takes on Kafka's tale of crime and (unusual) punishment with Philip Glass and Rudy Wurlitzer's *In the Penal Colony* at the Cyclorama at the Boston Center for the Arts.

On October 30, **THE DALLAS OPERA** premieres *Great Scott* by Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally, the duo's first collaboration since *Dead Man Walking* in 2000. (**SAN DIEGO OPERA**, a co-producer of *Great Scott*, will present the work in May.) And Dallas presents yet another world premiere this season: *Becoming Santa Claus*, with music and libretto by Mark Adamo, will arrive on December 4, just in time for Christmas.

To mark 50 years since the Voting Rights Act and 150 years since the end of the Civil War, **WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA** will present the world premiere of the revised version of Philip Glass' *Appomattox* on November 14. Later in the season, bass-baritone Eric Owens will star in Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars*. WNO also brings back Francesca Zambello's "American" *Ring* for three complete performances.

Continuing its mission of creating original operas for children, **OPERA PARALLÈLE** will premiere composer-in-residence Christopher Pratorius' *Amazing Grace*, based on the book by Mary Hoffman, on November 12.

The fourth annual **PROTOTYPE Festival**, co-presented by **BETH MORRISON PROJECTS** and **HERE**, will be held January 6 to 17 in New York City. *Angel's Bone*, by Du Yun and Royce Vavrek, workshoped in 2014, will receive a fully produced world premiere. Heidi Rodewald and Donna Di Novelli's *The Good Swimmer*, which updates *Antigone* to the Vietnam War, gets a first look. The festival includes a concert reading of *La Reina*, an electro-acoustic opera commissioned by **AMERICAN LYRIC THEATER** with text in Spanish and English by Jorge Sosa and Laura Sosa Pedroza.

Also in January, **OPERA America** presents orchestral readings of four operas in development during the New Opera Showcase, a new public event. The showcase, presented in collaboration with Novus NY orchestra of Trinity Wall Street, will feature *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Sheila Silver and Stephen Kitsakos, *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang, *Invention*

KAREN ALMOND

of *Morel* by Stewart Copeland and Jonathan Moore, and *Beowulf* by composer-librettist Hannah Lash. The New Opera Showcase, part of OPERA America's annual New Works Forum, is supported by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

In February, **HOUSTON GRAND OPERA** continues its long collaboration with 89-year-old Carlisle Floyd with the world premiere of *Prince of Players*, based on the play *Compleat Female Stage Beauty* by Jeffrey Hatcher. (In conjunction with the work's premiere, OPERA America will host *Masters at Work*, a five-part discussion series with Floyd at the National Opera Center.) Houston's HGOco will premiere *O Columbia*, by Gregory Spears and Royce Vavrek, which celebrates the identity of America's frontiersmen and women, as well as *The Root of the Wind is Water*, an opera by David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann about the impact of hurricanes on the Texas Gulf Coast.

In May, **OPERA COLORADO** will present the world premiere of *The Scarlet Letter* by Lori Laitman and David Mason. Also in May, **FORT WORTH OPERA** will debut *JFK* by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek. The premiere is part of the company's 10-year initiative to produce works by contemporary composers of the Americas.

It will be all work and no play when **MINNESOTA OPERA** presents the world premiere of *The Shining* in May. The music is by Paul Moravec, with a libretto by Mark Campbell based on the Stephen King thriller.

Looking ahead to next summer, **DES MOINES METRO OPERA** will include Philip Glass' *Galileo Galilei* in collaboration with the Science Center of Iowa. The work is to be performed in the planetarium at the Science Center of Iowa, and will feature astrological projections on the facility's domed ceiling. Another Glass work, *The Witches of Venice*, will receive its American premiere during **OPERA SARATOGA**'s season. The 1995 opera-ballet, based on the children's book by Beni Montresor, was originally produced at Teatro alla Scala. ●



CADE MARTIN

Bass Solomon Howard as Martin Luther King Jr. in Washington National Opera's world premiere of Philip Glass and Christopher Hampton's revised version of *Appomattox*. Conducted by Dennis Russell Davies and directed by Tazewell Thompson. Scenic design by Donald Eastman, costume design by Merrily Murray-Walsh and lighting design by Robert Wierzel.

On Albany Records, the acclaimed world premiere

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RECORDED DURING its triumphant debut at the 2014 Fort Worth Opera Festival, this one act opera by Daniel Crozier and Peter M. Krask is based on the visionary life of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, the 17th-Century Mexican nun, and champion of intellectual freedom.

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Many productions listed here are eligible for New Works Exploration Grants, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which provide travel and lodging support for representatives of OPERA America Professional Company Members to attend performances and workshops of new American works. Visit operaamerica.org/Grants for more information and to apply.

For more information on OPERA America's New Opera Showcase, visit operaamerica.org/Showcase.

For more information on *Masters at Work*, OPERA America's five-part discussion series with Carlisle Floyd, visit operaamerica.org/Masters. The discussions will also be streamed live at operaamerica.org/Live.

WELCOMING LGBTQ YOUTH TO THE OPERA

KEN HOWARD



As One, by composer Laura Kaminsky and librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed, is one of the most popular works in Palm Beach Opera's database of LGBTQ-friendly operas. Pictured above is the opera's world premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2014, with baritone Kelly Markgraf (Hannah before) and the Fry Street Quartet.

Forging a connection to young people has long been a core objective of **PALM BEACH OPERA**'s mission. From its Story Time Series for young audiences, to PBO Studio, a vocal apprentice program for high school students, to Community Concerts featuring young artists, PBO has continually expanded its suite of programs that engage youth. The company's latest initiative, Opera Out Loud, extends the company's civic commitment to the LGBTQ community.

Opera Out Loud began last spring when a member of the Compass Gay and Lesbian Community Center, based in nearby Lake Worth, Florida, approached Jourdan Laine Howell, PBO's education and community engagement manager, after a performance to express her concern that opera felt "heteronormative" to the point of

exclusion. Howell acknowledges that the term itself — used to describe a worldview biased against alternative sexual and gender identities — invokes "quizzical" looks from those unfamiliar with it, but she also acknowledges that accepting the language of identity is part of a culture of inclusiveness.

"You connect people to opera by finding stories that are accessible, relatable and personal," says Howell, "and you keep them engaged by giving them a sense of ownership over their own experience."

Opera Out Loud is still in its development phase, but for now it comprises numerous objectives: to discover librettos to which LGBTQ youth can relate through reading groups; to research and catalogue repertoire whose central plots or characters are representative of the LGBTQ community; to spotlight professionals in the opera industry who identify with the LGBTQ community; and to provide a resource to those looking for LGBTQ-affirming opera events.

Howell says the most popular opera for reading and discussion has been *As One*, with music by Laura Kaminsky and a libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed. The story of a transgender person in transition, *As One* was commissioned by **AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS** and supported in part by OPERA America's Opera Grants for Female Composers program, funded by The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation. *As One*

received its world premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2014 and recently received its West Coast premiere by **WEST EDGE OPERA**.

Among the other works currently in Opera Out Loud's online database are *Two Boys* by Nico Muhly and Craig Lucas (commissioned and co-produced by **THE METROPOLITAN OPERA**); *Champion* by Terence Blanchard and Michael Cristofer, and *27* by Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek (both commissioned and premiered by **OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS**); *Harvey Milk* by Stewart Wallace and Michael Korie, *Three Decembers* by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer, and *A Quiet Place* by Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Wadsworth (all three commissioned and premiered by **HOUSTON GRAND OPERA**); and *Oscar* by Theodore Morrison and John Cox (co-commissioned by **THE SANTA FE OPERA** and **OPERA PHILADELPHIA**).

Palm Beach Opera welcomes additional contributions to the database, which can be found at operaoutloud.org. Send suggestions to JLaineHowell@pbopera.org.

"You connect people to opera by finding stories that are accessible, relatable and personal."
— Jourdan Laine Howell



Champion, by Terence Blanchard and Michael Cristofer, explores the life of Emile Griffith, the prize-winning boxer who struggled with his sexual identity. Pictured above is Opera Theatre of Saint Louis' 2013 world premiere with (l-r) baritone Robert Orth (Howie Albert), bass-baritone Aubrey Allcock (Young Emile Griffith) and mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves (Emelda Griffith).

KEN HOWARD

WICHITA LAUNCHES YOUNG ARTISTS PROGRAM

“We’re the only game in town,” says Parvan Bakardiev, president and CEO of **WICHITA GRAND OPERA**, before correcting himself: “We are the only game in the *state!*”

As the sole professional opera company in Kansas, WGO, currently in its 15th year, has remained committed to performance and education across a wide geography. And it has now extended its reach by launching the Opera Academy of the Midwest. Throughout this past summer, 20 young artists and a distinguished faculty were in residence 60 miles north of Wichita at the restored 1889 McPherson Opera House and at Central Christian College for three weeks of intensive study and rehearsal. The Academy’s guest artists and faculty included Martin Mázik, Annalisa Raspagliosi, Samuel Ramey, Alan Held, Lynne Davis and William Powers.

Academy Fellows were featured in gala performances at the McPherson Opera House, at Wichita Grand Opera’s annual Opera on the Lake at Bradley Fair in Wichita and at the Stiefel Theatre in Salina. Selected students will also take part in WGO’s mainstage opera season at the Carlsen Center in Overland Park and the Century II Performing Arts Center Concert Hall in Wichita.

Bakardiev sees the Academy as a unique opportunity for talented young artists in the region to study and advance their careers. “We are giving them an opportunity to practice on a real stage of an opera house, rather than a rehearsal room,” he says, adding that the intensive daily social experience — living and eating together, plus studying, touring and singing together — are also part of the rigors of an aspiring singer’s life.

He also envisions the Academy making a significant contribution to the various communities WGO serves, as well as to young artists: “In the Midwest, we produce so many music students who study opera and music theater, but the supply is much larger than the demand. We are presenting them with an opportunity to be employed.”

The Opera Academy of the Midwest is sponsored in part by the Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission, the National Endowment for the Arts, Dr. Dennis and Ann Ross, Central Christian College, the Naftzger Fund for Fine Arts, the McPherson Opera House, the Ross and Marianna Beach Foundation, and the Charlotte Brickler Trust. ●

GIFTS, GRANTS AND CHALLENGES

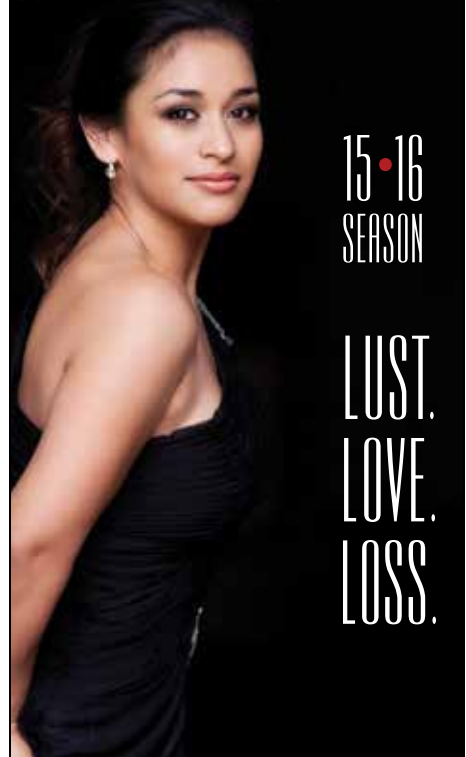
Notable contributions large and small have bolstered professional opera companies across all levels in recent months. **DES MOINES METRO OPERA** received \$150,000 from The Gardner & Florence Cowles Foundation to support the Opera Iowa Educational Touring Troupe for three years. Philanthropists Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson have donated \$1.5 million to **CHICAGO OPERA THEATER**, the single largest contribution in COT’s 42-year history. Combined with a recent, anonymous \$500,000 gift, COT is now \$2 million closer to meeting its goal of raising \$5 million to expand its season.

SAN DIEGO OPERA Board President Carol Lazier has donated \$1 million to SDO in honor of the company’s successful restructuring last season and as a gesture of support for the

company’s incoming general director, David Bennett. The company also received a \$250,000 gift from Darlene Shiley honoring stage director Jack O’Brien. O’Brien will direct the world premiere of Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally’s *Great Scott* at The Dallas Opera before it goes to San Diego in May 2016. Shiley previously supported Heggie’s *Moby-Dick* with a \$250,000 gift in 2012.

Fresh off matching and exceeding an anonymous \$100,000 challenge, **OPERA ROANOKE** has received another challenge grant of \$40,000. **THE INDUSTRY** has succeeded in matching a \$60,000 challenge grant awarded by Kiki and David Kindler. The funds are designated to support the company’s newest work, *Hopscotch*. ●

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PEOPLE

Jordi Bernàcer has been appointed resident conductor of San Francisco Opera.

Opera Delaware has promoted **Jason Hardy**, its director of development and community engagement, to the newly created position of managing director.

Opera Philadelphia, Gotham Chamber Opera and Music-Theatre Group have jointly appointed **David Hertzberg** as their fifth composer in residence, a three-year post funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.



Michigan Opera Theatre has appointed tenor **Richard Leech** as director of its resident

artist programs. He will head the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio, a new program that offers full-time engagements to emerging artists.

Fargo-Moorhead Opera has hired its first development staff person, **Shirley Leiphon**, who will serve as relationship director.

Jack R. Lemmon has been named executive director of Milwaukee's Skylight Music Theatre.

Cory Lippiello, formerly director of artistic planning and community engagement at The Atlanta Opera, has become deputy director of artistic planning at Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Lawrence Loh has been hired as artistic director and principal conductor of Syracuse Opera.

Kentucky Opera's principal conductor and music director, **Joseph Mechavich**, will take on the role of artistic director.

Gigi Fusco Meese has joined Long Beach Opera as its new managing director.

Opera Saratoga has welcomed **Ella Montelone** as its new director of marketing.

Chautauqua Opera has

announced that **Steven Osgood** will succeed Jay Lesenger as its artistic and general director.

Dan Plummer, previously development coordinator at Opera for the Young, is now the director of new initiatives and special projects at Florida Grand Opera.

Conductor **Kostis Protopapas** has been named artistic director of Opera Santa Barbara. He continues to serve in the same capacity at Tulsa Opera.

Jennifer Rivera has joined the Center for Contemporary Opera as its first director for artistic development.

Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre has appointed as its new executive director **Jennifer L. Schulte**. She succeeds Virginia Michalicek, who retired at the end of the 2014–2015 season.

The Los Angeles Philharmonic has appointed **Yuval Sharon** to a three-year artist-collaborator post, beginning fall 2016. He

remains artistic director of The Industry.

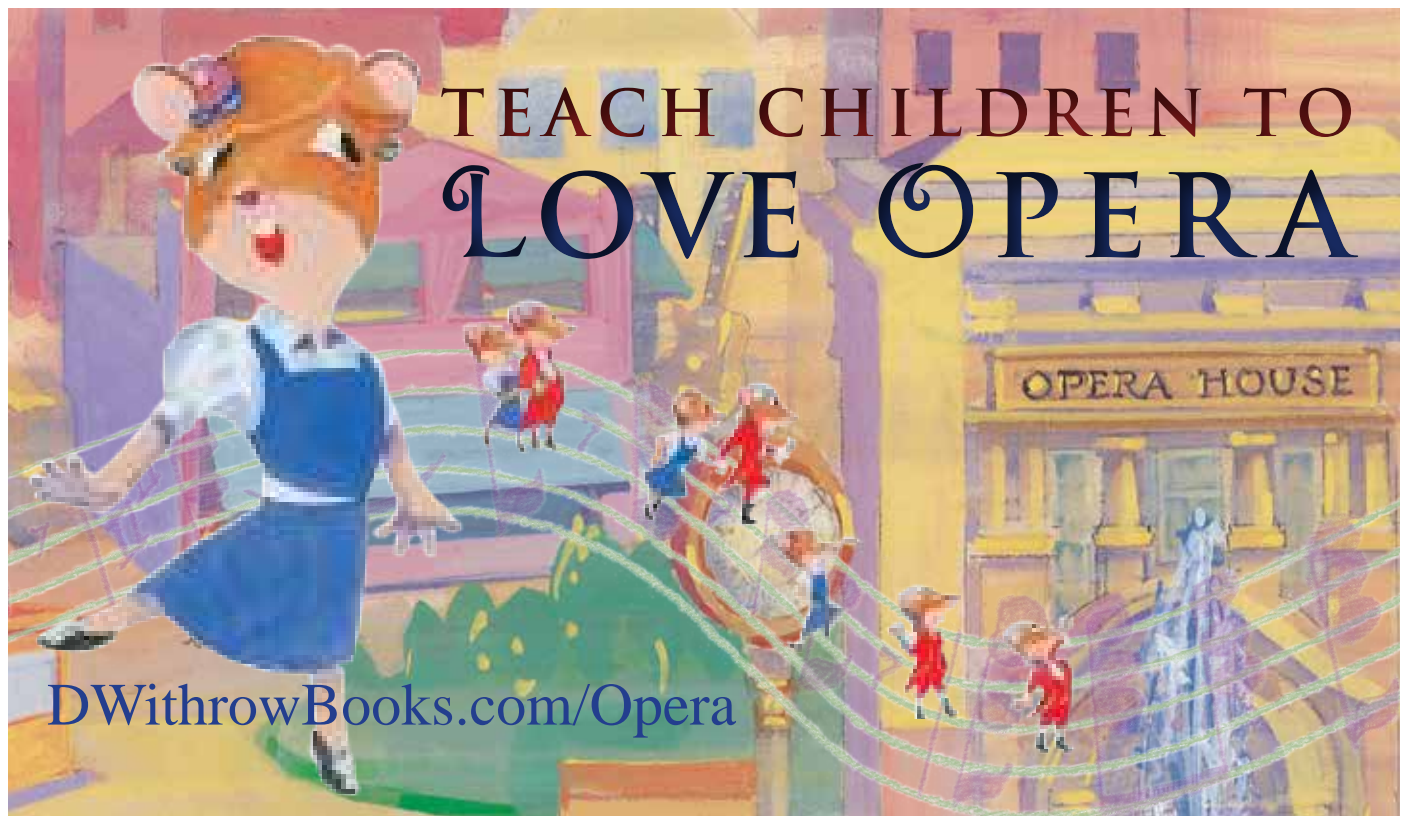
Minnesota Opera has welcomed as its new chief development officer **Carley Stuber**, who most recently served as vice president of philanthropy at Minnesota Children's Museum in Saint Paul.

David Walker, previously director of development at North Carolina Opera, has joined Palm Beach Opera as director of institutional advancement.



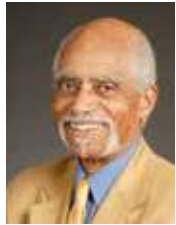
At American Lyric Theater, **Lyndsay Werking** has been promoted to managing director.

Opera on the James has hired **Donna Whitehouse** as its director of development, a newly created position. ●



KUDOS

Among the recipients of the National Medal of the Arts,



presented by President Barack Obama on September 10 at the White House, were

singer-composer **Meredith Monk** and **George Shirley** (pictured), the first African-American tenor to sing a lead role at the Metropolitan Opera.

Six conductors have been chosen for the inaugural season of The Dallas Opera's

Institute for Women Conductors, to be held November 28 to December 6. Supported by the Richard and Enika Schulze Foundation, the residency provides master classes, coaching and career support for aspiring conductors age 40 and under. The conductors are **Jennifer Condon**, a vocal coach and prompter in Berlin; **Jessica Gethin**, a graduate of the Symphony Australia Conductor Development Program; **Natalie Murray Beale**, a BBC Performing Arts Fund conducting fellow; **Stephanie Rhodes**, who has

served on the music staffs of several American opera companies; **Anna Skryleva**, principal resident conductor at the Darmstadt State Theater; and **Lidiya Yankovskaya**, music director of Harvard's Lowell House Opera.

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS

has selected six composers and four librettists to receive two-year fellowships as part of its upcoming eighth season of Composers & the Voice. Funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, this program provides emerging opera creators with resources

to hone their craft and develop new works. The fellows are composers **Matthew Barnson**, **Carlos R. Carrillo**, **Nell Shaw Cohen**, **Marc LeMay**, **Cecilia Livingston** and **Sky Macklay**, and librettists **Edward Einhorn**, **Duncan McFarlane**, **Emily Roller** and **Mark Sonnenblick**.

They will work with AOP's resident singers and artistic team to compose solo vocal works, attend skill-building workshops, and develop and promote their works. Select compositions will be chosen for workshops and staged readings. ●



Photography by Ted Washington. 2015 Production of Hansel and Gretel.

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IN MEMORIAM

HOUSTON GRAND OPERA



Director **Sandra Bernhard** died on June 18 at age 56. From 1990 to 2007, Bernhard served as stage director and stage manager at San Francisco Opera, producing classic repertoire as well as modern American works such as *The Ballad of Baby Doe* and *The Dangerous Liaisons*. She was also a coach and instructor of acting for San Francisco's Merola Opera Program.

In 2007, Bernhard founded Houston Grand Opera's HGOco education and community engagement initiative, securing high-profile grants to extend the program's reach. "Sandy was a brilliant, empathic, compassionate, passionate and exhaustive force for arts education in the United States," wrote HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech, Music Director Patrick Summers and Chairman John Mendelsohn in a joint statement. She directed operas at more than a dozen North America companies and held teaching posts at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Louisiana State University.

Mary Ann Gerlach, a devoted opera lover and benefactor of the arts, died on June 13 at age 84. She and her husband, Lloyd, helped to establish *The Opera Fund*, an endowment that allows OPERA America to fund the development of new operas, and contributed significant support to build the National Opera Center. A trained fiber artist and ardent world traveler, Gerlach championed the arts in her hometown of Milwaukee, supporting Florentine Opera Company, Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre and Milwaukee Repertory Theater.

Margaret Juntwait, the voice of the Metropolitan Opera's radio broadcasts for the past decade, died on June 3 at age 57. A trained lyric soprano, Juntwait started her radio career in 1991 at WNYC, and in 2004 was appointed

host of the Met's Saturday afternoon broadcasts, becoming the first woman to hold the position. She hosted a total of 229 live Saturday broadcasts, in addition to 898 live broadcasts on the Met's Sirius XM channel.

FRANKIE STEELE/KENTUCKY OPERA



Kentucky Opera's general director, **David Roth**, died on July 19 at age 56. During Roth's tenure, the company raised its artistic profile with productions of

modern American works, such as Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers*, Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*, and Daron Hagen's *A Woman in Morocco* and *New York Stories*. Roth also successfully navigated financial challenges and led the company to stability. Before coming to Kentucky Opera, he held the positions of director of finance and director of production at Fort Worth Opera. Roth also worked as a freelance stage director for companies such as Minnesota Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Duane Skrabalak, who died last April at age 65, and devoted his entire 44-year career to Tri-Cities Opera, was honored on June 12 at a concert in Binghamton, New York, with proceeds going to a memorial fund for local music students. Skrabalak served Tri-Cities as chorus master, vocal coach, conductor and, finally, artistic and music director before retiring in 2010. He made his conducting debut with *Faust* in 1974 and went on to lead more than 80 productions.

Canadian heldentenor **Jon Vickers**, renowned for the power and expressivity of his voice, died on July 10 at age 88. He began his professional career in Canada in the 1950s and went on to sing regularly at the world's leading houses, including Covent Garden, La Scala, the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. Among his signature roles were Britten's Peter Grimes, Verdi's Otello and Wagner's Siegmund and Tristan. ●

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ROBERTO BEDOYA AND THE ART OF BELONGING

A distinguished administrator, writer and speaker on the subject of placemaking and the politics of belonging in the arts, Roberto Bedoya, director of civic engagement for Arizona's Tucson Pima Arts Council, was featured as a speaker and in conversation with OPERA America President/CEO **MARC A. SCORCA** at *Opera Conference 2015* in Washington, D.C. last May. The following interview is adapted from those remarks.

Above: Roberto Bedoya delivers keynote remarks at the Opening Session of *Opera Conference 2015* in Washington, D.C. Photo: Jati Lindsay

MAS: “Civic Impact” was the theme of our conference this year, and as we explore opportunities for opera companies to engage their communities, what can we learn from your own?

RB: Tucson is a very odd place. We’re close to the Mexican border. We’re the seventh poorest city in the nation, which is an odd thing considering it’s so beautiful. But we have been able to institute PLACE, a civic engagement platform that supports artists’ projects that address critical community issues.

MAS: How do you define the concept of engagement and belonging?

RB: The idea of belonging is the poetic mark of how the 66 projects to date funded by the PLACE initiative have shaped our civic landscape. Through art practices and activities, the artists engage with social concerns, personal memories, cultural histories, imagination and feelings to enliven a sense of belonging within the participants and the audiences they reach. Through these projects, they have collectively shaped the identity of Tucson and allow us to feel a sense of belonging within it. They operate in the social space of dialogue and deliberation, and present visions and manifestations of social cohesion. They activate democracy so as to build the commons, illuminating how an aesthetic of belonging happens on city blocks and performance venues, classrooms, neighborhood centers, and churches. Whether accidental or deliberate, these kinds of art practices are critical to creating a sense of belonging.

MAS: How do you think opera fits into this landscape of belonging?

RB: How do we “belong”? How do we present ourselves as the plural? Through voting? Through our attendance at conferences? Through our participation in making and producing art? Through engagement practices that shape the civic “we”? I believe the story of belonging is tethered to ethics, aesthetics and the social contract between artists, arts organizations and audiences. Key to understanding this contract are engagement and metaphor. And by metaphor I mean poesies — the bringing into being associated with the civic, the plural and the “we.” And that “we” includes people you don’t know. It is that democratic idea of “we the people,” who belong to a just and equal society.

I’m not a big opera person, but I believe that opera gives form to belonging. When I was extended the invitation to speak at OPERA America’s conference, as part of my research I attended three operas: *La bohème*, *Eugene Onegin* and *Tosca* in San Francisco, Tucson and Chicago. They were wonderful experiences. They produced that kind of pleasure of new knowledge. And I’ve got a hungry appetite for newness. There was something about the combination of voice, gesture and staging that was very seductive. And I really dug the fans. I was sitting in the balcony in Tucson, and somebody downstairs was yelling “Bravo!” And I thought, man, that really pushed his button.

They also reminded me a bit of the *telenovelas* my *tías* watch. They love those soap operas! And the projected texts reminded me of the “bubble speak” you find in graphic novels.



Tucson and Pima County residents participate in the Ethnographic Field School, a project supported by the PLACE initiative in which the University of Arizona trains community scholars to record their own stories of cross-cultural mixing, migrations, civic participation and artistic practices.

MAS: Indeed, there are those moments when opera does go directly to the heart, bypassing cultural and economic barriers. But did you experience barriers, as well?

RB: There are anxieties and actions of dis-belonging that happen in life, whether through politics, policy, prejudice or commerce. How does the opera field reflect on dis-belonging? Is the opera business model caged in a you-pay-to-belong practice — seating assignments, big donor pursuits, the capital campaigns? How does the perception of eliteness associated with a

discipline foreclose civic possibilities? Are the engagement practices caught up in the frame of the “white savior complex” with all that paternalistic “we’re going to save your life” methodology of how to engage?

How do you build social cohesion, trust and engagement? As director of civic engagement, my charge is to serve the public, from the white gloves to the anarchists.

And they all knock on my door and tell me what to do with my public funds. I listen to them knowing how their stories are primarily stories of self-interest. And for me, the work is how to turn their narrative into a story of best interest

“There are anxieties and actions of dis-belonging that happen in life, whether through politics, policy, prejudice or commerce.”

for the community. How do I move from positions of self-interest to best interests, and then to a position of shared community value? That’s the work.

And, as anybody knows, in this business, you often have to talk about impact and data. We came up with something we call Social Impact Indicators. We ask all our grantees to talk about their projects in terms of these areas: engagement, empowerment, stewardship, cross-cultural understanding, bridging differences, aesthetics, and community health and well-being. This becomes our evaluation template.

MAS: How did you experience your immersion in the opera community at our conference? Are we who you thought we would be?

RB: You did a wonderful job of making me feel like a great guest. But I also had the privilege just to listen, and I have a deep appreciation of what I've observed about the passion and thoughtfulness of the dialogues, all over the map — whether you're looking at impact or whether you're looking at relationships and education.

MAS: How would you report to others about the state of the opera field? That these guys don't know where they're going? That we're lost in the woods? That they're seeing a path forward? How would you assess us?

RB: There's a really earnest and serious and thoughtful reflection on moving forward. There's a launch. Your reflection on civic impact is inspiring to me because I work in this world of civic-ness all the time, and colleagues across the country in various disciplines are really thoughtful. But to just be immersed for a few days in a discipline that I'm really not very familiar with and to figure out

all the complexities associated with this inquiry has been wonderful. A thought that emerges through this observation: In dialogues about community, I found myself reflecting on those times when "community" was a noun and those times when "community" was a verb. And in an engagement project, the verb is really when you build community.

MAS: When you say "community" as a noun, you mean as we refer to a Latino community or a gay community?

RB: Right. You have to constantly look at your points of relevancy, and you need to look at race, in your audiences and in your engagement. Demographics are changing. I hate to be preachy, but I feel like you guys will do it, and you'll figure out the complexities, and you'll deal with all the privileges you have to unpack in order to move ahead.

MAS: But "community" as a verb — the action of building community?

RB: Yes. It's the difference between transactional and relational. The relational part is "community" as verb. And it kind of goes back to the economies of your business. This paradoxical sort

of space of trying to understand the "good" and the "goods." The goods are the bottom line — your opera house and all that stuff. And the good is the music, your relationships, the art, and living in that tension. I appreciated that struggling and thoughtfulness that I heard. I also heard from artists that they want to have a little more agency in the broader landscape of support structure of the arts.

MAS: Where I first connected with you was your essay about belonging. You were speaking largely about the underserved communities in Tucson and the need for people to feel that they belong in this country, that they belong in the community, and we have extended that to thinking about how we get people to feel that they belong in our art form, how they belong in our venues and the reciprocity of belonging — how our art form belongs to them. You went to three different opera houses — did you feel as if you belonged? Were you welcomed in some subliminal or explicit way that made you feel you belonged in our venue, that you belonged in our art form?

RB: There's becoming, and then there's belonging. Am I becoming an opera

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fan? I'll see more. I met some wonderful people and heard about some wonderful projects at the conference. So becoming an opera fan makes you sort of feel like you belong. I am beginning to understand the vocabulary of a discipline I really didn't have much knowledge about. So I think that to create this sense of opera as a form of belonging really goes all the way back to the very beginning of how you're taught: How do you become a fan? How do you become literate in opera language? How do you become these people that have great voices or that are great storytellers? So, the ultimate belonging is the relationship of the narrative. How does that narrative welcome you, treat you as a guest and then you leave a host?

MAS: Our business model is not always welcoming. You don't get to meet the artists, you don't get to go backstage, and you don't get to have early information about the season unless you're a major contributor.

RB: That goes back to the "good" and the "goods" and how you balance that. It's a big, tough question, but all I can say is just step inside it. Be inside of

that question: "Does our business model cage us from our possibilities to be actually more woven into civic life?" You're smart. You can figure it out.

"There's becoming, and then there's belonging. Am I becoming an opera fan? I'll see more."

We work with a number of tribal communities where the notion of sovereignty is so profound because it is about their identity. I've sat in that zone, and I think that somehow when it comes to art and comes to relationships, we must think about the sovereignty of context. So that your locale — what happens in Arizona may not be happening in Des Moines — and your context will really have a lot to do with your business and how you work. Ultimately, you have agency because you work and live in the place you work, and it has their stories, and those stories inform a certain kind of governance, whether it's the way the city works or even how you work with your school districts.

I love sitting and listening. There's empirical evidence and there's

phenomenological knowledge. So we need to know how to tell the story of affect, of feelings, of movement, of tears. That's part of the impact story. I think it's really important, and the only advice on that one is I think when you're going down that path, think of yourself as an ethnographer. Tell your story as an ethnographer, and that would really be part of the arguments that we're always making with funders, with our elected officials, with your audience members. Stories are opera's greatest gift. ●



Visit OPERA America's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/OPERAAmerica](https://www.youtube.com/OPERAAmerica)

to watch Roberto Bedoya's remarks at *Opera Conference 2015*, as well as additional conference sessions on civic impact.

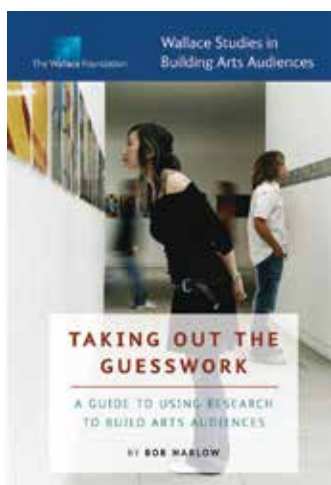
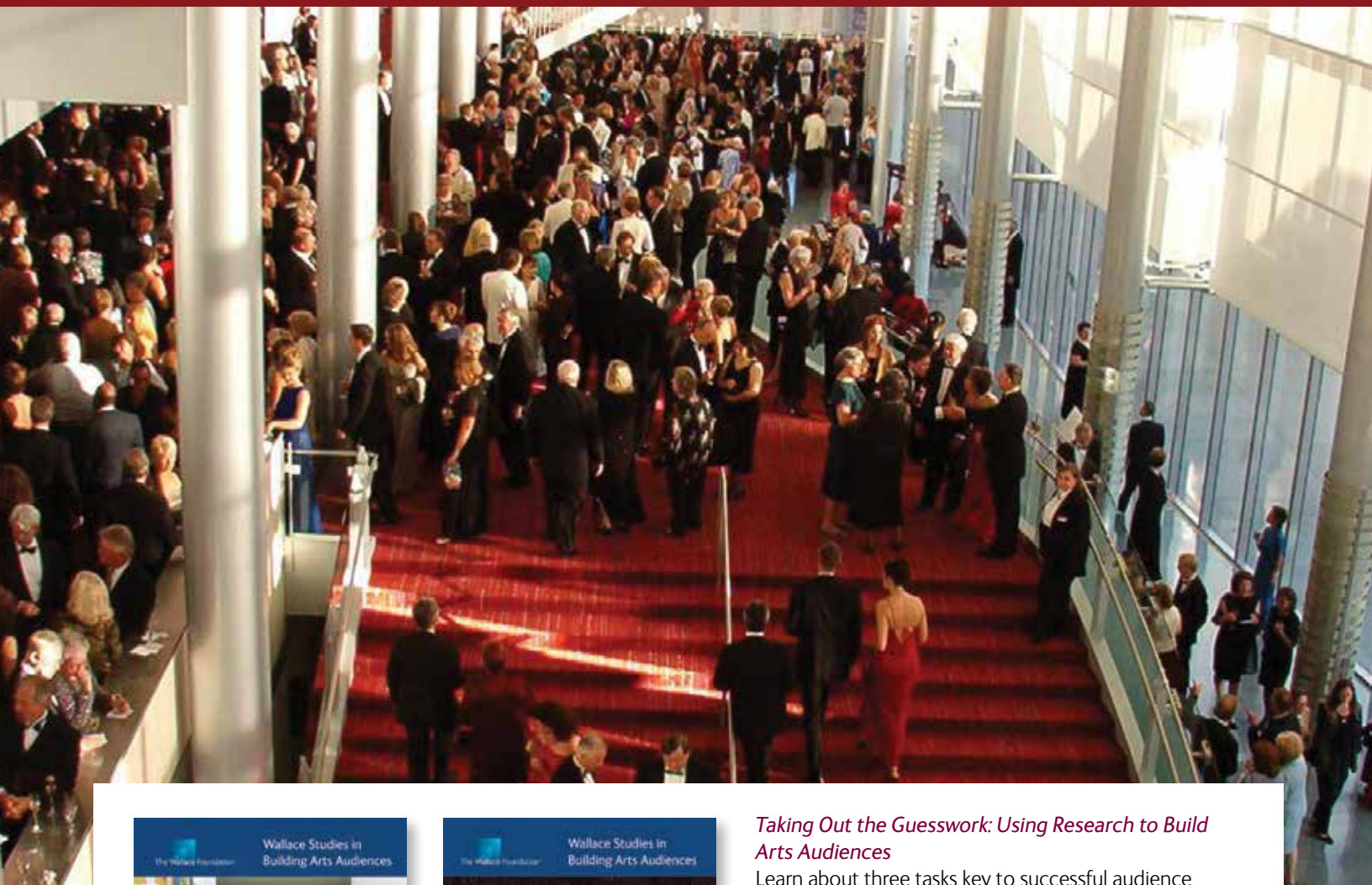


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SCHOOL AS STAGE: EMBRACING OPERA IN THE CLASSROOM

As public school resources for the arts continue to decline, OPERA America and its member companies deliver programs and services that spark an interest in the art form, while providing learning tools for broader classroom impact. OPERA America’s director of learning and leadership, **LEAH D. WILSON**, reports on the latest developments in the field.

Fourth grade teacher Ra Price had a difficult student in her class. The boy had a hard time focusing and often needed to leave the room. There was, however, one thing that held his focus — opera — and he was cast in a role that was meaningful to him. The boy’s job was to open the curtain, and it was a task he took seriously. Says Price, “At the end of the day, he knew he had to keep it together to have the opportunity to join the rest of the class for the opera.”

Teachers across the country have embraced opera in their classrooms as a means of changing students’ lives. An inherently multidisciplinary and collaborative art form, opera offers skill

sets that provide numerous entry points for learning. Since many operas are based on literature or historical events — known as “rigorous texts” in the language of professional educators — the canon readily connects to language arts. Production elements link to math and science. Vocal and technical training elements further prepare students for higher education and careers.

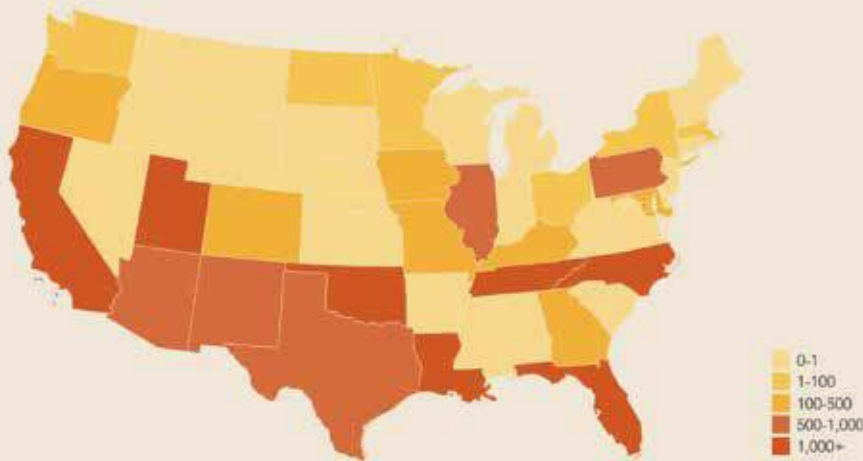
Price has participated in **SAN FRANCISCO OPERA**’s ARIA Network program for three years. ARIA, which stands for “Arts Resources in Action,” is a multiyear partnership between school teachers and professional opera teaching artists that connects elements of opera to classroom curricula. Price recognizes that

she is not trained in the arts, but through ARIA she has gained the confidence to sing with her class and teach her own opera lessons. “When the teaching artist first invited me to sing a song in front of the kids, I said, ‘I don’t think so,’ but we started by singing together,” says Price. “I realized what mattered more was that I showed the kids that I was courageous enough to take the risk.” For the shyer students in her class, opera became a way for them to express themselves, both in small groups and as a part of a full class production.

Opera companies offer hundreds of programs to elementary school students each year, reaching tens of thousands of classrooms. According to OPERA America’s

Heather Gallagher, Boston Lyric Opera’s resident teaching artist, works with students at Saint Brendan School in Dorchester, Massachusetts, as part of BLO’s Create Your Own Opera residency program. Photo: Boston Lyric Opera

K-12 TEACHERS SERVED BY OPERA COMPANIES



Source: OPERA America's FY2014 Annual Education Survey (53 responding companies).

recent Education Benchmarking Survey, the 53 responding companies served more than 22,000 teachers in 2014, most of whom were public classroom teachers. **OPERA CAROLINA**, based in Charlotte, served 47,900 students last year alone, more than three times the number reached through other programs, including main season performances. The company's touring performances visited schools across the state and beyond. Next year, Opera Carolina will present *How Nanita Learned to Make Flan*, an opera by Enrique Gonzalez-Medina based on the children's book by Campbell Geeslin. It tells the story of Nanita, the daughter of a Mexican cobbler, who makes herself a pair of enchanted shoes for her first communion. The shoes magically transport her to the desert, and she must find her way home. Partially sung in Spanish, *Nanita* was originally commissioned by **CINCINNATI OPERA** and premiered in 2009.

Since Opera Carolina began touring to schools in 1971, it has adapted the program to suit changes in the local population and school districts' needs. North Carolina has a fast-growing Latino population, and many districts have dual-language schools. In response, Opera Carolina's education director, Ashley Lam, chose a work that would have resonance and offer teachers "a vehicle to explore what they were already doing in their classrooms and dig into current issues." This can even mean hands-on character-building: The program will include shoe drives at the schools so that students can give back to their communities. Performance fees are based on what a school can afford and are sometimes underwritten by local arts councils or corporate sponsors. Each teacher receives a comprehensive guide of background information and activities that help prepare students for the experience, as well as lesson plans that the teacher can lead afterward.

With the help of **BOSTON LYRIC OPERA** teaching artists like Heather Gallagher, Boston public school teachers nurture learning skills through OPERA America's signature *Music! Words! Opera!* curriculum. BLO's 10-week residency culminates in a performance of an original opera. Beforehand, the school teachers participate in summer professional development training to learn the opera creation process themselves. "I didn't know I could compose," says Lisa Pierce-Goldstein, a speech language pathologist and autism consultant, as well as a former professional opera singer. She adapts the curriculum to produce mini-operas in her classes, and she finds it a very accessible tool for helping students build vocabulary, understand narrative and develop social skills. "I was amazed — one of the students wanted to sing one of the big songs, a student I thought wouldn't want to participate," says Pierce-Goldstein.

Boston Lyric Opera's support for teachers — before, during and after the program — is offered free of charge, and has resulted in more than a dozen classrooms creating operas based on topics ranging from Greek mythology to the 1969 lunar landing. "Professional development helps teachers grow and become more empowered," says Lacey Upton, BLO's manager of community programs. "The direct service aspect makes them feel supported. Residencies let us have a hand in knowing how the project is working on the ground, instead of just imparting it." Teaching artists assist on a weekly basis with writing the libretto, composing music, staging and accompaniment. Gallagher even created technical teams with assignments for designing costumes and running supertitles. Marketing teams designed

OPERA AMERICA LAUNCHES ONLINE RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS



The newly launched National Opera Teacher and Educator Source (NOTES) is an online platform that brings together hundreds of lesson plans, study guides and supplementary teaching materials for incorporating opera into the classroom. NOTES, which can be accessed at operaamerica.org/NOTES, is free and available to the public, and

users may search the resources by opera title, grade level, subject area, time required and additional criteria.

With NOTES, OPERA America builds upon nearly three decades of leadership in opera education. In the 1980s, OPERA America developed the pioneering *Music! Words! Opera!* program, a series of textbooks and curriculum materials that empowers classroom teachers and their music colleagues to take a multidisciplinary approach to

teaching the arts and guides students through creating their own opera productions. Over the last 25 years, and with the generous support of the Hearst Foundations, OPERA America has offered hundreds of *Music! Words! Opera!* professional training and development workshops for thousands of teachers across North America.

Visit operaamerica.org/NOTES to learn more and explore the resources.

flyers to put around their school. "It was a conscious effort to find multiple ways to engage kids who weren't on the stage," Upton says. "It was a strong added benefit and made the project even more inclusive."

Opera educators are well-positioned to impart robust music literacy, as well as arts and humanities instruction, particularly where such programs do not exist. Says Upton: "We were working in schools this year that don't have arts programs. The kids didn't have a basis for participating in theater games. That can feel very foreign. The teaching artists have to combat that and think creatively about getting students to open up and participate fully in the project at first." Like BLO, Opera Carolina also works with many students who have received little or no previous musical instruction. As a result, Lam now designs materials for general classroom teachers that focus less on the music itself and more on how the art form draws upon every aspect of the curriculum.

There are non-musical challenges, too. Opera companies and teachers alike must gain support from school administrators and buy-in from individual principals to incorporate opera into their curricula. In Boston, Upton says some administrators champion opera education, but some do not. Her colleague Lisa Pierce-Goldstein's principal and direct supervisor were supportive from the start and later observed one of her lessons in action. In Pierce-Goldstein's words, "Seeing capabilities that you don't know kids have is always important."

An additional challenge is time itself. Something as simple as a snow day can throw off the best of schedules, and there can be unanticipated delays or demands on classroom time. Says Andrea Fellows Walters, director of education at **THE SANTA FE OPERA**, "The most precious resource schools have to give opera companies is time with their students."

Partnership is a key factor in success stories. **FLORIDA GRAND OPERA**, **PENSACOLA OPERA**, **SAN DIEGO OPERA**, **SAN FRANCISCO OPERA** and **THE SANTA FE OPERA** were recently honored at Yale University's Symposium on Music in Schools. They were recognized for their collaborative efforts with local public schools that employ full-time music staff. In the selection process, Yale's associate dean of the School of Music, Michael Yaffe, sought "substantive partnerships between public schools and music" that displayed "mutual respect and passion between the partners."

OPERA America's newest education initiative, NOTES (National Opera Teacher and Educator Source), is an online database of classroom materials searchable by grade and subject matter and scalable to the needs of teachers. With the support of the Hearst Foundations, OPERA America was able to bring together more than a hundred lesson plans, study guides and videos created by opera companies — all in an effort to overcome the barriers of cost, time and geography that limit existing opera learning programs.

One of the first teachers to test out the new NOTES site was Meredith Mooney, a music teacher at Dr. James "Red" Duke Elementary School in Manuel, Texas, and

educator and specialist on Long Island who also tested NOTES.

NOTES gives teachers who already partner with opera companies a place to go after the tour performance leaves or the residency is over. Users can sign in to save lessons to a personal "shelf" and share suggested modifications with other teachers. This can be a boon to pre-service and new teachers who are looking to establish a network of colleagues and augment their personal collections of learning materials. "I love having access to materials from people and places I may never otherwise see," says Hana Abrams, a first-year music teacher from Saint Louis. "Not only does that give teachers even more to use in practice, but it allows us to



LIZA VOLT PHOTOGRAPHY

Fifth grade students from Saint Brendan School perform their opera about the 1969 moon landing as part of Boston Lyric Opera's residency program.

the creator of Opera Alive, an award-winning project in which students composed an original opera about American Revolutionary War heroine Sybil Ludington. "I love the amount and quality of the resources, as well as the clear labeling of each resource and the helpful search features," says Mooney. "It's such a wonderful and ambitious plan to gather resources from all over the country in one helpful place."

With the guidance of a curriculum specialist, OPERA America created new lesson plans to supplement the collection, as well as accompanying video demonstrations so that teachers can see how they work with real live students. "These activities are great icebreakers for putting your classroom in a creative space," says Seanna Burke Silver, a music

reinforce that every production is unique and that our students can make an opera about whatever appeals to them most." Bringing opera into her classroom has allowed Abrams to establish a collaborative environment, as well as bring kids out of their shells: "A recalcitrant student participated in a makeup workshop and painted on his own mustache," she recalls. "It gave him a whole new persona, and he became one of the leading roles in the opera."

The **METROPOLITAN OPERA GUILD** recently published select findings from its effort to assess the impact of opera learning on student achievement. The Comprehensive Opera-Based Arts Learning and Teaching (COBALT) program served more than 200 teachers and nearly 2,000 elementary students in New York City

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public schools over three academic years. First graders in particular showed greater improvement on test scores, particularly in math, compared to control schools. Teachers also rated students on socio-emotional skills, such as respect for others and collaboration. Stuart Holt, the Met's director of school programs and community engagement, reports, "Overall, many teachers explicitly expressed that their students were thoroughly enjoying the experience of participating in this type of learning, and it improved their engagement and overall positive mood in class." The Guild heard that the majority of teachers (62 percent) mostly or strongly agreed that opera-based learning had a positive impact on the classroom culture. Over two-thirds of teachers (69 percent) agreed that students were better behaved on days when they were working on a lesson that implemented opera-based concepts and methods.

COBALT is an important step for framing research in the opera field, and it builds on a long line of arts education research. Numerous reports link the arts to improved test scores and cognitive ability, but arts education has also been shown to turn around the country's lowest performing schools, bridge divides among teachers of different generations and improve student attendance and discipline records. With measurable, immediate and tangible achievements, companies need not only focus on the long game of producing the next generation of opera singers or loyal audiences.

Beyond the primary objectives of forging new curriculum tools and cultivating a passion for opera, these initiatives by professional opera companies also enhance the broader civic life of the communities they serve. Opera can level the playing field, enabling students — and their teachers — to succeed. And there is another measure of success, which San Francisco's Ra Price sees as the highest compliment: After observing how much enthusiasm kids are putting into their opera productions, and the joy that results, parents are now requesting to have their children in her classroom. ●

Leah D. Wilson is director of learning and leadership at OPERA America.

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OPERA'S BROADWAY OVERTURES

Classic American musicals are now embedded in the repertoire of opera companies of all sizes, but how do they contribute to overall strategies of building, diversifying and retaining audiences? *Opera News* Features Editor **BRIAN KELLOW** examines the artistic, marketing and production challenges of bringing Broadway to the opera house.

The Glimmerglass Festival's 2011 production of *Annie Get Your Gun* by Irving Berlin and Dorothy Fields, with soprano Deborah Voigt as Annie Oakley. Conducted by Kristen Blodgett and directed by Francesca Zambello. Scenic and costume design by Court Watson. Lighting design by Mark McCullough.

There was a time, not so long ago, when presenting American musicals on the opera stage was looked upon as a form of creeping philistinism. Still suffering anything after Puccini, hardcore opera devotees had a hard time seeing the presence of Broadway classics, no matter how beloved, as anything other than a marketing sellout.

Operagoers have generally been averse to change, not just with repertoire, but with violations of other opera fundamentals, such as the sanctity of the unamplified voice. In 1982, **HOUSTON GRAND OPERA** produced a Broadway version of *Show Boat*, which toured

extensively before coming to New York. Initially, everyone in the show was miked except for opera singer Donnie Ray Albert, who played Joe, and Broadway belter Alix Korey, who played Ellie. Even New York City Opera stalwarts Sheryl Woods and Jacque Trussel were amplified.

Over the next decade, a host of recordings "legitimized" Broadway musicals by casting them with opera singers: Kiri Te Kanawa, José Carreras, Tatiana Troyanos and Marilyn Horne recorded *West Side Story*; Frederica von Stade, Teresa Stratas and Jerry Hadley did *Show Boat*; Samuel Ramey and Maureen Forrester turned up in *Carousel*; von Stade, Hakan Hagegard and Eileen Farrell were heard in *The Sound of Music*.

Broadway entered a new era of respectability on the opera stage in 2012, when **LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO** mounted *Show Boat*, directed by Francesca Zambello (a production subsequently presented by Houston Grand Opera, **WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA** and **SAN FRANCISCO OPERA**). Lyric had staged musicals before (*Sweeney Todd* among them), but this *Show Boat* was in a different league. Starring a combination of opera singers (Nathan Gunn, Alyson Cambridge) and Broadway performers (Ashley Brown), Zambello's staging mined maximum gravitas from Edna Ferber's powerful story of miscegenation and marital discord.

Produced as part of Lyric's eight-opera season, *Show Boat* was a critical



and commercial hit. The company's management revved up its commitment to doing musicals, launching its American Musical Theater Initiative, comprising five musicals over five seasons. But the initiative came with a crucial difference: Rather than replace one of the scheduled eight operas in its traditional season with a musical, Lyric would follow the main season with a stand-alone production performed on a Broadway-style schedule. "That allows us to market it, price it, communicate it differently from the way we sell an opera," says Lyric's general director, Anthony Freud. "It was a complicated decision, based on lessons we had learned over a number of years."

"An opera company is a cultural service provider, and if at the end of the day we have attracted people to set foot in our building when they never attended anything here before, that is an end in itself." —Anthony Freud

Among the lessons learned was how to market an opera-house musical: "We have one preview, an opening night, and we are immediately into eight shows a week for three weeks," says Lisa Middleton, Lyric's director of marketing. "Broadway houses could have 5, 10, 15 previews and all that time to build up the anticipation. We have to get the excitement out about the title right away." There was a learning curve for production, too. From a technical point of view, producing a musical can be quite different from producing an opera. Musicals generally have more — and more complex — scene changes and individual cues. There's also the added element of dance, something most operas feature only minimally. "We have become a better opera company because we have produced these musicals," says Freud.

But will staging expensively mounted productions of Jerome Kern, Cole Porter and Rodgers & Hammerstein classics such as *Show Boat*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *Carousel* help bring in single-ticket buyers who have never before crossed the opera-house threshold — and will it convert them into loyal subscribers? Lyric's commitment to musicals centers on the classic Rodgers & Hammerstein shows. *The Sound of Music*, which the company staged in May 2014, with a cast ranging from Broadway's Billy Zane and Edward Hibbert to opera's Christine Brewer and Elizabeth Futral, sold 71,000 tickets, and the company states that 56 percent of the show's audience had never before bought a ticket to anything at Lyric. *The Sound of Music* proved to be the number one ticket seller in Lyric's history. The company's 2015 production of *Carousel*, starring Broadway's Steven Pasquale and opera's Denyce Graves, also took a top-grossing spot. All told, Lyric's recent musicals have sold over 155,000 tickets.

"One motivating factor that led us to program musicals is that we wanted to bring a new audience into the building," says Freud, and that goal has clearly been achieved. But can those ticket buyers be converted into lovers of *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Nabucco*? Lyric's musical ticket buyers have subsequently purchased nearly 20,000 tickets to other performances, valued at over \$1.5 million. Still, Freud claims there's something at play that's

more important: "An opera company is a cultural service provider, and if at the end of the day we have attracted people to set foot in our building when they never attended anything here before, that is an end in itself. It means we are providing a broader, deeper cultural service to our city."

In Houston, overall sales for its 2013 production of *Show Boat* were at 91 percent of capacity, but the big surprise was that 2.6 percent of those who bought single tickets for *Show Boat* went on to buy HGO subscriptions for the following season, a conversion rate "a tad higher" than for single-ticket buyers for opera who subsequently subscribed, according to Judith Kurnick, HGO's director of communications. *Sweeney Todd*, which HGO presented in the spring of 2015, sold at 89 percent of capacity. The number of single-ticket buyers for *Sweeney* who have bought subscriptions for 2015–2016 is already at 1.5 percent, and growing as this story goes to press. As with Lyric, the objective of opening the opera house to new faces has also been achieved in Houston: 63 percent of *Show Boat*'s single-ticket buyers, and 65 percent of *Sweeney Todd*'s, had never been to HGO previously.

Big-budget opera companies aren't the only ones presenting musicals. According to OPERA America's repertoire database, productions of *Porgy and Bess* and *Candide* (yes, both originated on the Broadway stage) can be found in every season at one company or another. More contemporary Broadway hits are also arriving in the opera house. In recent seasons, **AMARILLO OPERA** and **FRESNO GRAND OPERA** have both presented *Les Misérables*. Matthew Buckman, general director of Fresno Grand Opera, believes that Broadway should be embraced, even in the face of disdain: "Musicals should be considered at least the stepchild, if not the direct descendant, of opera. And our primary goal at Fresno Grand Opera has been to get our community to embrace a wider definition of opera."

Of the Rodgers & Hammerstein musicals, the "Big Five" — *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I* and *The Sound of Music* — have the steadiest presence across the board. These shows not only demand a great deal of singers, but they have socially relevant themes that make them seem at home at opera

“Our musicals have brought in a lot of new audiences, but although ours have done well at the box office, a musical is not automatically going to be a cash cow.”

—Francesca Zambello

companies. Ted Chapin, president of the Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization, is the guardian of the R&H catalogue. He feels that opera companies, like any other producers, simply have to do the shows as well as possible. “If you’re good to Rodgers & Hammerstein, they’re very good to you,” says Chapin. “But if you don’t do them very well, there’s not an automatic audience.” Chapin notes that Lyric Opera of Chicago has faced a particular challenge that others may share. “They are doing these musicals in a town that has seen these shows in any number of iterations,” he says.

Like the Rodgers & Hammerstein canon, the works of Stephen Sondheim have also established a solid presence in the opera repertoire, not just in the U.S., but globally, too. According to Drew Cohen, president of Music Theatre International, which licenses the Sondheim catalogue, the number of productions of *Sweeney Todd* and *A Little Night Music*, both with books by Hugh Wheeler, has grown steadily over the last decade. “*Sweeney Todd* is a popular choice of opera companies worldwide,” he says. “*A Little Night Music* is a significant title for opera companies in North America but is not done by foreign opera companies as extensively.” The popularity of *Sweeney Todd* has grown over the years, he notes, in particular following the release of the motion picture.

What also propels *Sweeney Todd* and *A Little Night Music* is their scalability to the vocal and production resources of companies of all sizes. According to MTI’s own 15-year licensing history, the range of professional opera company productions of *Sweeney Todd* has cut across cities large and small: Toledo, Calgary, Saint Louis, Biloxi, Vancouver, Syracuse and Roanoke, not to mention Chicago and Houston. This season alone it will be presented by San Francisco Opera, **TOWNSEND OPERA**, **TRI-CITIES OPERA** and **PORTLAND OPERA**, as well as in a new production directed by Christopher Alden at **THE GLIMMERGLASS FESTIVAL**.

When Francesca Zambello became general and artistic director of The Glimmerglass Festival in 2011, she committed to



Houston Grand Opera’s 2014 production of *A Little Night Music* by Stephen Sondheim and Hugh Wheeler, with soprano Andrea Carroll (Anne Egerman) and tenor Chad Shelton (Fredrik Egerman) at center. Conducted by Eric Melear and directed by Matthew Ozawa. Scenic and costume design by Isaac Mizrahi and lighting design by Brian Nason.

attracting a wider audience — and not simply the opera diehards. She has included a musical in each season, tending to cast “up” by choosing a show that will represent an acting stretch for a major singer: Nathan Gunn in *Camelot*, Deborah Voigt and Rod Gilfry in *Annie Get Your Gun*, Dwayne Croft in *The Music Man*, and next summer, Greer Grimsley in *Sweeney Todd*. Zambello wants Glimmerglass audiences to experience musicals in optimal “operatic” circumstances: in a 1,000-seat theater, without amplification. “Our musicals have brought in a lot of new audiences,” Zambello says, “but although ours have done well at the box office, a musical is not automatically going to be a cash cow.” Rights are, generally speaking, more expensive, and casts can be large. “It’s not *Aida*,” she says, “but it’s in the range of as many people in the chorus as you have in *Elixir of Love*.” Glimmerglass tries to integrate its musicals into the general theme of its season: *The Music Man* was performed in the midst of other works about

community, and this year’s *Candide* was part of a philosophy-themed season that also included *Die Zauberflöte* and *Macbeth*.

“Maybe soon we’ll meet the *Carousel* crowd at *Wozzeck*,” says Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Lisa Middleton, and as the numbers reveal, she may not be too far from the truth. But the repertoire continues to evolve, crossing geographic as well as theatrical boundaries. Once again, Houston Grand Opera has led the way. In 2010, it premiered *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, dubbed “the first mariachi opera.” With a score by José Martínez and Leonard Foglia that integrates classically trained and folk voices with traditional mariachi instrumentalists, the show went on to hit runs in San Diego, Chicago, Tucson and Phoenix. Lyric Opera of Chicago followed Houston’s lead, commissioning a second Martínez/Foglia collaboration, *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*, which premiered earlier this year. *El Pasado* was commissioned

Continued on page 37



Lyric Opera of Chicago's 2015 co-production, with Houston Grand Opera, of *Carousel* by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, with Laura Osnes (Julie Jordan) and Steven Pasquale (Billy Bigelow). Conducted by David Chase and directed and choreographed by Rob Ashford. Scenic design by Paolo Ventura, costume design by Catherine Zuber and lighting design by Neil Austin.

BEST OF BROADWAY



An analysis of OPERA America's Schedule of Performances revealed the following musicals to be most frequently performed by Professional Company Members in the past 10 years. Musicals are defined as those works originally performed as commercial productions in Broadway theaters.

Credits and premiere dates are for original Broadway productions and do not include subsequent adaptations or revisions.

Though the following list is sorted alphabetically, the most frequently performed works in the past 10 years are *Porgy and Bess*, *Candide*, *Show Boat* and *Sweeney Todd*.

Title	Music	Lyrics	Book	Premiere
<i>Candide</i>	Leonard Bernstein	Richard Wilbur John La Touche Dorothy Parker	Lillian Hellman	1956
<i>Carousel</i>	Richard Rodgers	Oscar Hammerstein II	Oscar Hammerstein II	1945
<i>Fiddler on the Roof</i>	Jerry Bock	Sheldon Harnick	Joseph Stein	1964
<i>The King and I</i>	Richard Rodgers	Oscar Hammerstein II	Oscar Hammerstein II	1951
<i>The Light in the Piazza</i>	Adam Guettel	Adam Guettel	Craig Lucas	2005
<i>A Little Night Music</i>	Stephen Sondheim	Stephen Sondheim	Hugh Wheeler	1973
<i>My Fair Lady</i>	Frederick Loewe	Alan Jay Lerner	Alan Jay Lerner	1956
<i>Oklahoma!</i>	Richard Rodgers	Oscar Hammerstein II	Oscar Hammerstein II	1943
<i>Porgy and Bess</i>	George Gershwin	DuBose Heyward & Ira Gershwin	DuBose Heyward	1935
<i>Show Boat</i>	Jerome Kern	Oscar Hammerstein II	Oscar Hammerstein II	1927
<i>The Sound of Music</i>	Richard Rodgers	Oscar Hammerstein II	Howard Lindsay & Russel Crouse	1959
<i>South Pacific</i>	Richard Rodgers	Oscar Hammerstein II	Oscar Hammerstein II & Joshua Logan	1949
<i>Sweeney Todd</i>	Stephen Sondheim	Stephen Sondheim	Hugh Wheeler	1979
<i>West Side Story</i>	Leonard Bernstein	Stephen Sondheim	Arthur Laurents	1957

**"Maybe soon
we'll meet the
Carousel crowd
at Wozzeck."
—Lisa Middleton**



Patrons and performers mingle at Fort Worth Opera's After Show Lounge.

PHOTO: TRAVIS ROBERTSON



BEFORE AND AFTER THE SHOW: ENHANCING THE PATRON EXPERIENCE

The artistry of performance remains the centerpiece of a night at the opera, yet companies continue to explore ways to enhance the “before” and “after.” Responding to the desires of ticket buyers, they are offering add-on programs and events that extend the operagoing experience, while making the opera house a more welcoming place for diverse audiences. **NICHOLAS WISE**, *Opera America Magazine’s* associate editor, spoke with opera marketing leaders and reveals innovations from the field.

When exactly does the opera experience begin? Certainly before the curtain goes up, before the audience takes their seats, and before, perhaps, a patron even walks through the doors of the opera house. It may begin when he or she first hears a radio spot, receives an e-blast for a pre-season kickoff event or simply searches an online arts calendar to plan a Saturday night. Regardless of when and where it begins, first impressions are now being rethought by opera marketers eager to find low-pressure, personal ways to welcome audiences to the opera house before they even consider buying a ticket.

“You can’t just send out a brochure anymore,” says Camille Spaccavento, director of external affairs and marketing at **OPERA COLORADO**. “You have to find touch points, easy entry points for potential operagoers. But it can’t be so arduous that it’s hard on the organization, hard on the staff and hard on the budget.”

One of the ways Opera Colorado leverages its marketing capacity to welcome operagoers is through its annual Patron Day, an event coinciding with the first day of single-ticket sales. Patron Day allows the public to explore the opera house, enjoy a cup of coffee, listen to live excerpts and buy tickets using a special discount. “It makes it a people event, rather than just signing on to a website to buy tickets,” says Spaccavento.

Such events convert the crucial first impression from the transactional to the personal. Something as simple as offering

a special event for the entire community can send a potent message of openness and inclusivity: Before its spring season begins, **FORT WORTH OPERA** welcomes ticket holders and non-ticket holders alike to an open house in which they socialize, mingle with staff members and hear singers perform excerpts from upcoming productions. Offering food and free giveaways helped bring nearly 500 people through the door at last season’s event, but, according to FWO General Director Darren K. Woods, dangling carrots didn’t preclude a deeper engagement with the company. “We originally thought people would come in, get the goodie bag and leave,” he says, “but people stayed and stayed and stayed.” Woods believes the success of such events can’t — and shouldn’t — be measured in terms of immediate ticket sales; an open house instead serves a longer-term objective of building brand familiarity and

breaking down perceptions of opera as an elitist art form.

Relationships can also be built through the mass media and social media tools that are now part of every opera marketer’s toolbox. To reach potential audiences, **KENTUCKY OPERA** has forged partnerships with local radio and television personalities, inviting them to attend performances and then share their experiences with listeners and viewers. Targeted, customized e-mail invitations harness the power of one-to-one appeal to increase potential patrons’ comfort level with the company. And there is always the human touch: “Someone often comes to the opera because someone else personally invites them to have that experience, and I take that to heart,” says Randy Blevins, a marketing consultant for Kentucky.

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OPERA AMERICA GRANTS TO ENHANCE THE AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE



In 2013, with the support of the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, OPERA America launched the Building Opera Audiences grant program. A total of \$900,000 has since been awarded to 29 different initiatives, many of which directly address the patron experience, encompassing a wide range of initiatives that reduce barriers to attendance.

Most recently, **FLORIDA GRAND OPERA** received a Building Opera Audiences grant for its Opera in Hialeah project, which offers free transportation to performances for residents of a predominantly Hispanic community that the company also engages through educational events.

CENTRAL CITY OPERA previously created a Boomer Bus, designed for

those aged 50 to 65, that transports ticket holders to the opera house and provides entertainment along the way. **VANCOUVER OPERA**, through its Transporting Opera Audiences program, turned transportation into an event by providing free “opera trains” featuring pre-performance talks, giveaways and a dedicated podcast.

Grants for initiatives designed to attract opera newcomers, especially younger patrons, have included **FLORENTINE OPERA COMPANY**'s Bohème Society, a young professionals group that convened for receptions and social events, and **LOS ANGELES OPERA**'s Newcomer Project, which sought to create a fun and approachable environment for those new to opera. **SAN FRANCISCO OPERA** turned the War Memorial Opera House

into a social space for a Community Open House targeted at those new to the organization and under 40.

Market research has also been funded in order to better understand the attitudes, motivations and desires of current and potential patrons. This year, **LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO** received funding to study its audiences and determine ways it can develop relevant and appealing loyalty programs for patrons who are new to the company. Last year **OPERA PHILADELPHIA** was awarded a grant to conduct consumer segmentation research to gain insight into the motivations and values of its current and potential audiences.

For more information about Building Opera Audiences and other grant opportunities offered by OPERA America, visit operaamerica.org/Grants. ●

on the patron experience roadmap is often a company's website — a digital welcome mat that has the potential to convey a company's identity and also address questions about the operagoing experience. Under such menu categories as “Plan Your Visit,” “Attending the Opera,” and “Your Experience,” companies offer information from restaurants to parking tips to dress code (the industry standard is “wear what you like”). Robust content of this variety is a cornerstone of **OPERA PHILADELPHIA**'s recently redesigned website. “A big goal was to convey the experience — and not just be a ticket vendor,” says Ryan Lewis, the company's director of marketing and membership. “We wanted to showcase what it is actually like to come to a production.” This meant not only creating an extensive “Your Visit” section with FAQs, add-on experiences and information about the company's venues, but also developing a “Behind the Scenes” hub of interviews, blog entries and videos — all designed to whet patrons' appetites for the in-person experience.

When Opera Colorado redesigned its website last year, it similarly boosted its patron experience content while also addressing ease of navigation. Spaccavento emphasizes that it's crucial to adopt the mindset of a new patron when tackling such projects: “Our philosophy behind the development of the website was this: You're coming to our website for the first time. You might not know about opera or Opera Colorado, and you may be new to Denver. What are you looking for, and how can we deliver

that information to you as easily as possible?” This led Spaccavento to look at the websites of fellow opera companies and identify best practices, such as minimizing the number of clicks it takes to buy a ticket. “When you go to buy tickets, you shouldn't have to go through a lot of screens,” she says. “Many sites will put it behind two or three pages.” The takeaway: Make it as easy as possible for patrons to loosen their purse strings.

While online ticket purchases have eclipsed sales made via box office or phone, in-person purchases still remain an important component of the patron experience at many opera companies. For **MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE**, the box office is an important arena for building loyalty through face-to-face interactions. “We employ a remarkable group of box office associates, all of whom are on a first-name basis with many of our patrons,” says Jillian Zylinski, the company's communications coordinator. And if ticket-buyers don't come to you, you can always go to them: The company's audience engagement coordinator, Arthur White, created Opera Clubs, a grassroots engagement program in which company representatives visit 14 different communities throughout metro Detroit and Southeast Michigan. To provide each Opera Club with a personal introduction to the MOT's mainstage offerings, company staff lead discussions about the upcoming season and provide free performances of opera excerpts.

Michigan Opera Theatre's intimate knowledge of its patrons has allowed it to better respond to attendees'

concerns, including one of the less glamorous aspects of the operagoing experience: parking. Since moving to the Detroit Opera House in 1996, Michigan Opera Theatre has seen its surrounding neighborhood transformed by the construction of two new sports arenas and an influx of new bars and restaurants — a boon for pre- and post-performance entertainment and dining, but a source of deep frustration for those traveling to the opera house by car.

The problem was particularly acute when an opera performance coincided with a sporting event. Minimal capacity and high prices alienated audiences, says Zylinski. “In Detroit, we know that the idea of parking blocks away or paying \$30 would certainly deter some of the suburban or senior citizen matinee patrons.”

The solution? In 2005, MOT purchased and razed a dilapidated parking garage across the street and built its own state-of-the-art, 770-car parking center in its place. This allows MOT to offer pre-paid parking so that many of its patrons can secure parking spaces near the theater at a reasonable price. The company also offers \$10 parking vouchers to subscribers first, and then to single-ticket buyers, to help address the price barrier. “This is good customer service and upholds MOT's mission to keep its performances accessible,” Zylinski says.

Colorado's **CENTRAL CITY OPERA**, a summer festival with year-round events, was similarly challenged in providing an essential amenity to its patrons, except the issue at hand was not where to park, but where to eat. A Gold Rush-era mining

town with some 700 residents, Central City cannot support a robust year-round dining scene that would be able to ramp up when the opera crowd arrives. Local casinos offer restaurants, but, says the company's director of marketing, Valerie Hamlin, casino cuisine doesn't have a great deal of crossover appeal for opera fans. (And vice versa, she notes.) A decade ago, Central City Opera encouraged Denver-based restaurateur Kevin Taylor to establish two restaurants open only during CCO's festival season. Set in the 1870s Teller House, one of the 30 historic properties owned by the opera company, the restaurants not only fulfill a basic patron need for sustenance and socializing, but they also allow diners to become immersed in the history of the city. "Our buildings in and of themselves provide a very unique experience for patrons," says Hamlin. "They were built by miners to live in while they were mining gold, and when you step through the front door, it's like stepping back in time."

While opera companies are working to make their houses as accessible, approachable and welcoming as possible, they are also responding to many patrons' desires for more elaborate operagoing experiences. Add-ons such as talk-back sessions with production staff and parties with cast members are now *de rigueur* at many opera companies, joining more traditional programs like in-house dining and special donor receptions.

Opera Philadelphia has tailored its wide range of add-ons in response to a consumer engagement research project it began in 2014, supported in its early stages by a Building Opera Audiences grant from OPERA America. Working with a consulting firm, the company has identified several audience segments that each desire something different from an evening at the opera. One segment, dubbed "wallflowers," attends primarily to experience the opera itself, and "they need a safe space," says Ryan Lewis, while another segment, called "omnivores," are "very interested in the social aspect — meeting people, the after parties." Omnivores, for example, would be much more likely than wallflowers to purchase the company's backstage pass, which allows them to attend a private reception and tour the stage following the performance. The backstage pass comes with a \$50 price tag, but, Lewis notes, "People who want a special experience aren't as price sensitive as we would think. A lot of people who are coming to the opera are celebrating a special occasion, and the backstage pass gives them a taste of what a donor experience is like."



Baritone Benjamin Wood sings opera excerpts in front of the Ellie Caulkins Opera House as part of Opera Colorado's annual Patron Day, which marks the first day of single-ticket sales.

While respecting those who cherish the primacy of the performance, companies are increasingly addressing audience segments that value socialization. The importance of the social experience was stressed earlier this year when the National Endowment for the Arts released the 2012 General Social Survey findings, which showed that the top motivation for performing arts attendance was the desire to socialize with family and friends.

This social component is a particular hallmark of opera festivals, where patrons have often traveled from a wide geographic area, bringing with them high expectations for entertainment outside the opera hall. For companies like **THE SANTA FE OPERA**, socializing is not just an add-on experience, but part of the festival's very fabric — the weft that brings together patrons between successive viewings of multiple productions. The company's constellation of patron activities is so vast that one category alone — dining — has options to suit nearly every palate and circumstance: Choices include organized tailgating before performances, pre-ordered picnic boxes for al fresco dining, "preview buffets" with dessert-course lectures, high-ticket opening night dinners and exclusive patron dinners with festival artists in private homes.

Santa Fe has had more than half a century to refine its multitude of pre- and post-show programs, but many festivals in North America are much

newer to the game. As more companies transition from main season to festival formats, they are having to adjust and amplify their patron programs to engage operagoers over the course of multiple days. When Fort Worth Opera became a festival in 2007, it retained programs that appealed to its longtime patrons, such as galas, pre-performance dinners and opera balls, while introducing a wealth of new social events — ones that might draw newcomers and better reflect the company's image as "the punky stepbrother to The Dallas Opera," as Darren K. Woods puts it. A section of its website once called "Opera 101" has now become "How to Fest."

Among FWO's initiatives, which include pre-show talks, behind-the-scenes tours and after-show parties with cast members (all free to ticketholders), is Opera Shots, a program in which FWO's young artists perform in bars and breweries, singing excerpts from mainstage productions, as well as short, tongue-in-cheek compositions like Patrick Soluri's *Figaro's Last Hangover*. The company performs Opera Shots throughout the year to build awareness, but during the festival season, it becomes a potential add-on experience for ticketholders. Following a performance of *La traviata* last season, the company set up speakers to play arias on the street, luring mainstage attendees to heed the

Continued on page 41

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OPERA AMERICA AMBASSADORS TRAVEL TO FRANCE

This past July, members of OPERA America's Ambassador Circle traveled for a week in southern France, visiting the renowned Festival International d'Art Lyrique in Aix-en-Provence. Thirteen Ambassadors experienced six operas spanning over 300 years of musical creation.

Between performances, the Ambassadors explored Provence's rich cultural and historical heritage, enjoying the region's finest delicacies and wines. Co-produced with Act 1 Tours, travel partner and Business Member of OPERA America, the trip also included tours of regional museums, Cézanne's studio and local olive oil and lavender distilleries.

The Ambassador Circle is a group of dedicated opera lovers, patrons, artists, administrators and trustees whose generous gifts to OPERA America provide the foundation for services to the opera field. Previous Extended Travel trips have included a "Best of Britain" tour to Glyndebourne, Garsington and the Royal



Opera, as well as excursions to Venice, Berlin and Santa Fe. In July 2016, the Ambassadors will travel to Naples, Italy.

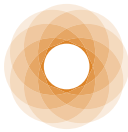
For more information about Ambassador Travel, contact Dan Cooperman, OPERA America's director of development, at 646.699.5266 or via e-mail at DCooperman@operaamerica.org. See page 36 for a list of upcoming trips. ●



Top (l-r): Anupam Puri, Olin Sansbury, Dan Cooperman, Jane Bernstein, Phyllis Bratt, Alberto Ilano, Jim Bratt, Irma Heidenry, Robert Ellis, Mary Ann Claud, Steve Prystowsky and Rajika Puri at Le Saint Estève restaurant at Les Lodges Sainte Victoire.

Bottom left (l-r): Local guide Henriette Versteeg, Steve and Rochelle Prystowsky, Marc A. Scorca, Anupam Puri, and Olin Sansbury on Place de l'Hôtel de Ville in Aix-en-Provence.

Bottom right: Robert and Irma Heidenry at the Château Grand Boise vineyard.



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FASHION EXHIBITION OF BELLE ÉPOQUE DIVAS

This fall, OPERA America inaugurates its latest design exhibition, *Divas of the Gilded Age*, which investigates the intersection of fashion, celebrity and the leading ladies of opera and operetta. Focusing on the years often referred to as the Gilded Age or *La Belle Époque* (from the 1890s to the beginning of World War I), the exhibition examines performers, clothing designers and periodicals, highlighting the careers and fashions of such singers as Lina Cavalieri, Geraldine Farrar and Mary Garden, along with several others.

The exhibition was curated by Daniel James Cole, a noted fashion historian, costume designer and professor of costume studies at New York University who previously organized OPERA America's 2013 exhibition devoted to costume designer Martin Pakledinaz. The current exhibition will open on Tuesday, September 29, with a public reception to be held that evening from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The opening will include a short lecture by Cole and fellow NYU costume professor Nancy Deihl, as well as a book signing of their recent publication, *The History of Modern Fashion* (Laurence King Publishing), a decade-by-decade examination of fashion from 1850 though 2010.

The exhibition runs through February 13, 2016, and is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the National Opera Center's seventh-floor Design Gallery.

Soprano Mary Garden modeling a town dress by the fashion house Redfern, photographed for *Les Modes*, 1903.



OPERA JOURNALISTS TOUR ISRAEL

At the invitation of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism and the Israeli Opera, opera journalists from North America, Japan and Germany participated in a weeklong tour that included Jerusalem, The Dead Sea, Tel Aviv and performances of the Israeli Opera at Masada National Park. Among the press tour participants was OPERA America's director of marketing and communications, Patricia Kiernan Johnson.



Above: The Israeli Opera's performance at *Tosca* at Masada.

Left (l-r): Samuel Speiser, Beasley Broadcast Group; William Littler, *Toronto Star*; Zachary Kussin, *New York Post*; Judith Malafrente, *Opera News*; Richard Sasanow, *BroadwayWorld.com*; and Patricia Kiernan Johnson.

YOSSI ZWICKER

LEADERSHIP INTENSIVE ALUMNI GATHER IN NEW YORK

With support from the American Express Foundation, OPERA America's Leadership Intensive identifies promising professionals in the field of opera administration and provides them with specialized training and networking opportunities to bolster their leadership capacities. This year, with continued support from the American Express Foundation, OPERA America launched Leadership Intensive Next Steps (LINS) to provide customized, advanced training to alumni of previous Leadership Intensive classes.

After convening earlier this year at *Opera Conference 2015*, LINS participants gathered at the National Opera Center from July 30 to August 2 for a series of roundtable discussions and seminars on topics such as social entrepreneurship, presence and personal presentation, civic impact, storytelling, and risk-based financial management. ●



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Top row (l-r): James Hampton, Michael Mori, Thomas Rhodes, Benjamin Makino, Jamie Andrews, Bradley Vernatter and David Krohn. Middle row (l-r): Barbara Lynne Jamison, Jen Bradner, Brittany Duncan, Peggy Kriha Dye and Ashley Magnus. Bottom row (l-r): Sean Waugh, David Rubeo and Ian Rye.

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Travel dates and programs subject to change.

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TIM TROMBLE



Arizona Opera's 2014 presentation of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* by José Martínez and Leonard Foglia, with members of Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán in background and (l-r) mezzo-soprano Cecilia Duarte (Renata), baritone Octavio Moreno (Laurentino), Saúl Ávalos (Chucho) and mezzo-soprano Vanessa Cerda-Alonzo (Lupita). Conducted by Martínez, directed by Foglia and choreographed by Keturah Stickann.

through Lyric Unlimited, the company's initiative designed to engage communities outside traditional opera audiences.

This does not mean every attempt to embrace a broader American vernacular will automatically engage traditional operagoers. HGO Managing Director Perryn Leech confirms that members of the company's regular subscriber audience will more likely show up for musicals, but they are less likely to attend every mariachi opera: "They say, 'I'll come to *Show Boat* and *Sweeney Todd*. But *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*? No."

In Tucson and Phoenix, where productions of *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* were mounted by **ARIZONA OPERA**, the approach and the results were markedly different. Instead of programming the work as a special event, the company placed it in their mainstage lineup — opening their 2014–2015 season with it, no less. According to Laura Schairer, the company's director of marketing and public relations, full houses greeted all performances, including several thousand new households.

Adding to the impressive turnout was the success of a follow-on marketing appeal that offered discounts to a future performance of *Rigoletto*. Invitations to single-ticket buyers for *Cruzar* yielded a 4.1 percent response, double the return

from the traditional operagoer list. "We converted them," says Arizona's general director, Ryan Taylor, "maybe not to subscribers, but at least to single-ticket buyers."

Taylor adds that programming *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* was not only an artistic and marketing success; it was a civic engagement success, as well. "It put us on the map," he says. *The Arizona Republic*, which usually limits coverage of opera to its arts pages, commended the company in its editorial pages, lauding it for "holding a mirror to contemporary life."

And then there was the public dialogue. "The work defies categorization," says Taylor, who believes that the acceptance of mariachi on the opera stage is not unlike crossing the dividing line between opera and musicals. Conversations among patrons throughout the season were strangely familiar to those who deliberated accepting Broadway into the fold. Says Taylor, "Patrons would ask, 'Is this opera? Or not?'" ●

Brian Kellow, *features editor of Opera News*, has published biographies of Eileen Farrell, Ethel Merman and Pauline Kael. His latest book, *Can I Go Now?: The Life of Sue Mengers, Hollywood's First Superagent* was published by Viking this fall.



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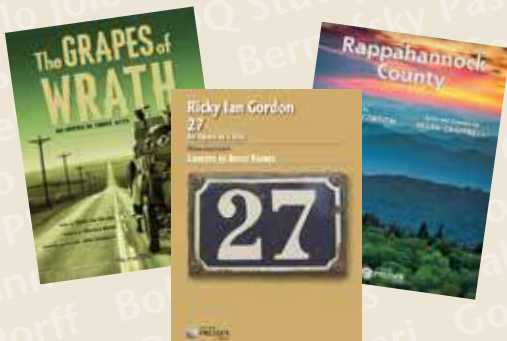
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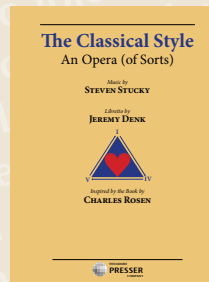


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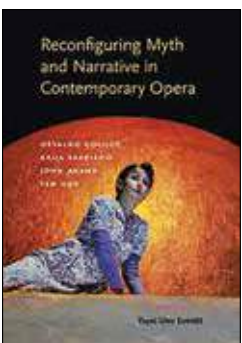
Tim Carter
Oxford University Press



Eschewing extensive technical analysis of musical detail, this volume instead begins where composers themselves do: with the text. Walking readers through the relationship between music and words, the author explores five of the most enduring and frequently performed operas: Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Puccini's *La bohème*. This guidebook details the creative genesis of each work, while also providing synopses, cast lists and suggested further reading.

RECONFIGURING MYTH AND NARRATIVE IN CONTEMPORARY OPERA

Yayoi Uno Everett
Indiana University Press



This study examines the unique interplay of music and production in four contemporary operas: Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*, Kaija Saariaho's *Adriana Mater*, John Adams'

Doctor Atomic and Tan Dun's *The First Emperor*. Production design, stagecraft, and their interaction with music and sung texts are explored in relation to the semiotics of operatic storytelling. Drawing upon Northrop Frye's theories of myth, Lacanian psychoanalysis via Slavoj Žižek, Linda and Michael Hutcheon's notion of production, and Robert Hatten's concept of troping, the author provides original interpretive models for conceptualizing operatic narratives.

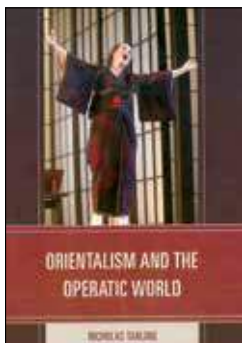
OPERA

Photos by David Leventi
Texts by Marvin Heiferman
and Thomas Mellins
Damiani

Photographer David Leventi, whose work has been widely published in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Condé Nast Traveler* and *American Photography*, spent five years recording the interiors of opera houses around the world. Presented here are 40 opera houses spanning four continents and four centuries, seen from the place at center stage where singers would stand. The large-format camera used by Leventi reveals the rich architectural details as well as acoustic design of each interior. With a foreword by Plácido Domingo.

ORIENTALISM AND THE OPERATIC WORLD

Nicholas Tarling
Rowman & Littlefield

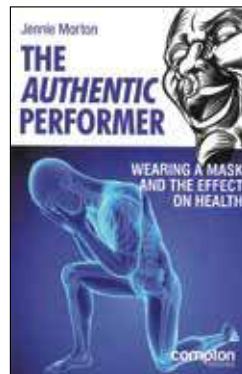


This scholarly survey places opera in the context of its steady globalization over the past two centuries. The author first considers how the "Orient" appears on

the operatic stage in Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States before exploring individual operas and the regions of Asia in which they are set. Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Mascagni's *Iris* and Verdi's *Aida* receive extended analysis. The book repudiates Edward Said's claim that Western art inevitably stereotyped and dehumanized the East, instead arguing that opera is a humanizing art form — one that, through epic depictions of passion, emphasizes what different cultures have in common.

THE AUTHENTIC PERFORMER: WEARING A MASK AND THE EFFECT ON HEALTH

Jennie Morton
Compton Publishing



Written by a professional singer and osteopath specializing in the treatment of performing artists, this volume examines the physiological, psychological and socio-cultural aspects

of being a performer and views them in the context of health and wellbeing. Interviews with leading performers from a variety of disciplines provide insights into the physiological processes of performing-arts-related injuries, giving readers information to better manage their own health. The author posits that performers who "hide behind a mask" are those who may take the longest to heal from injuries.

THE OPERA LIVELY GUIDES: WRITTEN ON SKIN

Luiz Gazzola
Opera Lively Press



This extensive guide to composer George Benjamin and librettist Martin Crimp's *Written on Skin*, which premiered at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in 2012, examines the opera from every angle, including

its literary source, characters and voice types, orchestration, performance history, and critical reception. New insights about the opera are gleaned from extensive interviews with the work's creators, the director of the world premiere production and the singers who have brought the opera's characters to life. A complete libretto and scene-by-scene musical analysis round out the book.

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Tosca (courtesy Scott Suchman, Washington National Opera)

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opera's call of "Libiamo!" at a nearby Opera Shots event. The event provided a unique opportunity for opera buffs to mingle with opera newbies: "We had 400 RSVPs and 400 more people came, too, half of whom were there just to drink beer," says Woods, "but they stayed and listened to what was essentially opera karaoke."

Many such social experiences are aimed at the elusive under-40 demographic — invariably called "young professionals" — which is seen as the key to replenishing an aging patron base. "Having the personal connection, having the social experiences, especially for young people, is crucial," says Kentucky Opera's Blevins. To that end, the company recently formed a group called YPOP (Young Professional Opera Patrons), which provides pre-performance parties for younger attendees. At Opera Colorado, the company instituted Inside OC, which offers ticket packages and pre-performance networking receptions "to crack the millennial market" and attract Denver's recent influx of young transplants, Spaccavento explains. At Opera Philadelphia, there is VIVACE,

aimed at those 45 and under (young by opera standards), which allows patrons to purchase premium-location tickets, sit among their peers at performances and attend after parties with cast members.

In their efforts to be inclusive, such experiential enhancements do carry the risk of appearing to exclude others. To combat this perception, Randy Blevins hopes to open up some of Kentucky Opera's more targeted events by using social media and other digital means. For example, the company plans to use the Periscope app to offer free live streams of performances that will take place at patron parties. "It's true that you can't come to the parties unless you pay enough," says Blevins. "But now you can break down those barriers of opera being seen as something that is elitist."

Alongside Fort Worth Opera's glamorous galas and exclusive dinners with artists is the company's Community Seats program, which not only offers tickets for as little as five dollars, but also addresses any concerns or questions these patrons might have about going to the opera. "We go to social service organizations, meet with the people who are coming to the opera and talk to them

about what it will be like," says Woods. "When we ask, 'What do you worry about?' they say, 'Not having the right clothes to wear.' And we tell them, 'There will be people in tuxedos, there will be people in jeans. And you can come in whatever you like.'"

A company certainly can't be all things to all people, but observing and fine-tuning its response to customer needs is an essential part of the before-and-after equation. A longstanding buff may simply wish to take his usual subscription seat and quietly read his program notes while others greet old friends in the lobby. Twenty-something enthusiasts may recognize each other at a bar down the street, spurring the creation of a young professionals group. Too many clicks to close a ticket sale? Build a better website. Suburbanites frustrated by parking? Consider buses or parking vouchers. Through initiatives both herculean and small, companies are converting challenges into chances to make audiences feel at home in their own opera houses. ●

Nicholas Wise is associate editor of *Opera America Magazine*.

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MY FIRST OPERA

BY ALEXANDER SANGER

JOYCE RAVID



When invited to write this column, I reviewed previous issues and noted that it was originally titled “My First Time.” I wondered if the editors changed the title in trepidation of having a guest author from Planned Parenthood, with his sure-to-be risqué badinage. Certainly operas can be risqué, so why not a column on my first experience with opera?

To dispel all suspense, I don’t remember much about my first opera. It was with my mother at the old Met, it was in Italian, and there were no subtitles. I don’t remember squirming in my seat — I was 12 or 13 years old and my mother didn’t allow squirming. I didn’t have a clue what was happening onstage, though it’s a safe bet that the soprano died tragically.

Love of music runs deep in my family. Our paternal family name, Sanger, originally spelled Sanger, means “singer” in German. In one ancestral instance, it was well-deserved: My paternal grandfather’s first cousin was the basso Emil Sanger (also spelled Senger), who performed more than 70 times at the Met, including the role of Nachtigall in the American premiere of *Die Meistersinger* and the role of the Steersman in the American premiere of *Tristan und Isolde*, both in 1886. My paternal grandmother, Margaret Sanger, adored the opera, and, as she traveled the country espousing birth control, would unwind at as many operas as she could, including taking H. G. Wells to *Lohengrin* at the Met in January 1922.

My mother, Edwina Sanger, trained as a concert pianist before her teachers convinced her that her hands were too small, and so she became a physician instead. I remember clearly that she took me to hear Arthur Rubinstein play Chopin at Carnegie Hall when I was about nine. My mother pointed out that he hit many wrong notes but that it didn’t matter — it was the feeling that counted. Her mother, my grandmother, Margery Durant, the daughter of a wealthy industrialist, wrote in 1929 that her dream was to build a performing arts center in Manhattan for opera, symphony and ballet, a full 30 years before Lincoln Center was conceived. This venture evaporated with the Crash.

I didn’t know any of this family history when opera took hold of me. At Princeton, I majored in history, but on a whim took a course in opera from Professor Kenneth Levy. I remember him saying that one often has to sit through four hours of ordinariness to get 10 minutes of brilliance, but that it was worth it.

One summer during college, in August 1968, I was working in Latin America and was walking down the streets of Buenos Aires when I saw a poster announcing that Renata Scotto was singing *Madama Butterfly* that night at the Teatro Colon. I bought a seat in the highest balcony for less than a dollar. I remember holding my breath as her high notes reached to us from, it seemed, a football field away. That was the night that opera got me.

In my 20s, when I was between marriages in New York, I thought a brilliant dating strategy was to take girls to high culture. Being young and habitually broke, I subscribed to two seats in the second to last row of the Family Circle for eight performances a season. None of my dates were impressed. Fortunately, my wife, Jeannette, does share my love of opera, and we have since introduced our children to the art form. One winter day, we took our six-year-old son, Andrew, to a Saturday morning education program at the Met. The cast was to perform an excerpt from *Hansel and Gretel*, and they asked for volunteers. Unbidden,

my son raised his hand, was picked and discovered to his delight that his sole task was to eat a piece of chocolate cake while the Witch sang.

Twenty years later, Andrew asked us to get un-gettable *Ring* cycle tickets at the Met two days before the performances. Somehow the Met patron office secured us two seats in the Family Circle immediately next to the proscenium. Looking straight down from this nauseating height, we could see the orchestra and the first 15 feet of the

stage. After sitting through *Siegfried*, I asked the patron office to send me a picture of the dragon in the cave at the rear of the stage, which we were unable to see. No one had ever asked them that before!

I have spent my working career, like my paternal grandmother, advancing the rights of women through Planned Parenthood. When I became a trustee of The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, founded by a woman who loved music and supported the advancement of women, I realized that I had never heard an opera by a woman, or even

heard of an opera by a woman. I asked Marc Scorca at OPERA America how many of the most recent new operas produced in this country were by women. There was a long silence. The number could be counted out on one hand, with fingers to spare.

Thus was born The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation Program for Commissioning Women in the Performing Arts. Through OPERA America, we launched two programs to commission and support operas by women. So far, two have reached the stage: *As One* by Laura Kaminsky, premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in September 2014, and *Charlotte Salomon: Der Tod und die Malerin*, by Michelle DiBucci, premiered in Germany in February 2015.

Another dozen operas by women are in the works, and opera lovers should look forward to many treats in the years ahead. I think Virginia Toulmin and my ancestors would be proud. ●

Alexander Sanger is currently chair of the International Planned Parenthood Council and has served as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Population Fund.



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