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

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ON THE COVER: Eric Halfvarson as Hagen in Los Angeles Opera's production of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, directed and designed by Achim Freyer, with costume design by Achim Freyer and Amanda Freyer, and lighting design by Brian Gale and Achim Freyer. Photo by Monika Rittershaus.

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publisher

OPERA America

editor

Kelley Rourke

associate editor

Alexa B. Antopol

art director

Katherine L. Ehle

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When the theme for *Opera Conference 2010: New Realities | New Strategies* was determined more than a year ago, we suspected that economic uncertainty would still dominate our thinking when we convened in Los Angeles. Today, indicators are mixed as stock markets struggle to respond to European deficits. In the United States, recovery appears increasingly robust despite an unwaveringly high rate of unemployment.

Our members meet in Los Angeles at a time when a number of companies are developing exciting new programs to position their companies on a more sustainable footing. *Opera Conference 2010* provides a wonderful opportunity to learn from colleagues and to work with them to develop even more effective strategies that respond to new realities.

OPERA America comes to *Opera Conference 2010* with a report of cautious optimism. Reduced general operating support from foundations and corporations is a new reality, but we are tremendously gratified that our growing family of individual donors has responded generously to our 40th Anniversary Campaign. At the same time, several corporations and foundations — along with our own improved endowment — enable us to announce important programs that will provide invaluable support to our members.

- *The Opera Fund's* endowment has returned to a level that enables us to re-instate Repertoire Development grants in FY2011. Professional Company Members and their partners will be eligible to request between \$30,000 and \$60,000 to defray some of the exceptional costs associated with the early development phases of new works.
- Thanks to a special grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, OPERA America will revive a program that provides travel support through FY2011 to opera company personnel wishing to travel to other companies to see new work and to meet with artists and potential co-producers.
- Another generous grant from the Mellon Foundation has enabled OPERA America to deliver a new program of webinars. A wide range of artistic and administrative sessions has attracted the participation of a majority of our member companies and will continue next year.
- The MetLife Foundation has made a generous grant to OPERA America in support of the extension of our *Music!Words!Opera!* curriculum to cities that have never before used the program. Grants of \$10,000 in FY2011 and \$5,000 in FY2012 will provide companies with time to introduce the program to educators and funders while building a local base of support.
- We are delighted that The Tobin Theatre Arts Fund will support OPERA America's 2011 Director-Designer Showcase which will now be known as the Robert L.B. Tobin Director-Designer Showcase. We are most grateful for this opportunity to encourage the next generation of opera stage directors and designers.

OPERA America cannot guarantee the success of our members. We are pleased, however, to create conditions for our collective progress through specific programs and through the communications network that is affirmed and advanced every time we meet for an Annual Conference. We hope you take full advantage of these and other services.

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

Marc A. Scorca
President/CEO



Heather Buck as Lulu Baines and Keith Phares as the title role in Florentine Opera's 2010 production of Aldridge's *Elmer Gantry*. Photo by Richard Brodzeller for Florentine Opera Company © 2010.

“WE ARE GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN BY BECOMING MORE PROGRESSIVE DURING LEAN TIMES.”

When two (or more) opera companies share a city, the larger company is often identified with standard repertory, while smaller companies tend to own the more adventurous fare. In many cities, however, it's no longer quite so simple.

Milwaukee is home to **Florentine Opera**, which presents three large-scale opera productions each year in the 2,200-seat Uihlein Hall, as well as **Skylight Opera Theatre**, which gives over 90 performances (including opera, music theater and cabaret) each season in a variety of venues, the largest of which seats only 358. While Florentine Opera once focused its attention on European repertoire from the 18th and 19th centuries, General Director William Florescu believes that the company will only stay vital by “including both ends of the spectrum — from Baroque opera to new opera.” The company's first foray into Handel (*Semele*, 2009) was tremendously successful, as was a recent new production of Robert Aldridge and Herschel Garfein's *Elmer Gantry*, which was recorded by Naxos. “We are going against the grain by becoming more progressive during lean times, but I think it's a smart way to go.”

Elmer Gantry set the stage for the company's first world premiere: *Rio de Sangre*, by Emmy Award-winning composer Don Davis and Los Angeles author and librettist Kate Gale. The opera, which will debut later this year, tells the story of the overthrow of a dictatorship in a fictional South American country “When it came across my desk, I was blown away by it in terms of subject matter — how complex, but also how direct it was,” says Florescu. “It gets opera back to commenting on political issues.”

“Anytime we tried to do something contemporary before, we dipped our toe in the water and then backed off,” says Florescu. “You have to commit to a direction if you are going to build the audience. The board has been very supportive. We're beginning a long-range planning process, and I think new opera is going to be at the heart of what we do.” Unlike other companies with active commissioning and development programs, Florescu says, “We are trying to fit a different niche, to find a newer work that deserves another hearing, like *Elmer Gantry*, or one, like *Rio de Sangre*, that is already in the mill. Don Davis had this great piece and didn't have someone to do it. That's where we come in.” 🎭

"IF EVER A COMPANY WAS CREATED FOR THE SINGER, THIS IS IT."

Irene Dalis founded **Opera San José** in 1984 as a professional opera company dedicated to showcasing and developing emerging opera singers. "It is the only company of this type in America," says Dalis who, like many singers of her generation, began her career in the resident company of a regional opera house in Germany. "We have artists on a 12-month contract, with a salary and housing provided. Between mainstage work and outreach they are singers all day, every day. A voice can be trained in the studio, but a *performer* can only develop by performing — preferably repeated performances — in full production. That is what we have available for our artists." Artists chosen for the resident company may remain for up to four years, during which they build substantial professional repertoire and are coached by resident and guest conductors and stage directors. "Many times, they are singing a role for the first time. Musical rehearsals go on for a couple of months, after which there are three to four weeks for staging. It is a luxury."

Opera San José, recently welcomed as a Professional Company Member of OPERA America, produces four operas each season in the California Theatre, a 1,100-seat auditorium built in 1927 that was dark for 30 years before it was refurbished by the opera company. "We are not a training program," stresses Dalis, who chooses singers she feels are ready to perform at a professional level. "The most difficult task is selecting operas for our group of singers. We try to give them a feel for the whole field of opera. We do a lot of Italian, and we try to do French every second year." The company's 2010-2011 season acknowledges the growing importance of new work in a singer's career, with a lineup that includes the West Coast premiere of David Carlson and Colin Graham's *Anna Karenina*, along with productions of *Tosca*, *La bohème* and *The Barber of Seville*.

The company has tremendous support in the local community. "Our public is amazing. We are funded mostly by individual contributions. They enjoy watching artists develop over the years." These ties are strengthened by an ambitious audience development program: When not rehearsing or performing mainstage roles, singers perform in schools and throughout the community at large. However, Dalis is happy to release them if they obtain paid contracts elsewhere. "If ever a company was created for the singer, this is it." 📍

Sandra Bengochea and Jason Detwiler in Opera Opera San José's production of Puccini's *La bohème*. Photo by Pat Kirk.





Krisztina Szabó and Keith Klassen in *The Colony*, an opera by Kevin Morse and Lisa Codrington, part of Tapestry New Opera Works's "Opera to Go 2010." Photo by Brian Mosoff, 2010.

"A VISION OF WHAT CAN BE POSSIBLE."

"We have in the city of Toronto a number of organizations that were birthed 25 to 30 years ago," says Wayne Strongman, who three decades ago launched the organization that was to become **Tapestry New Opera Works**. "There must have been something extraordinary in the water. Looking back, it was such an optimistic time in terms of arts councils and rebirth. But at the time, it just seemed like something we needed to do." The company began as an eight-singer ensemble that performed a variety of music in town halls across Canada. "I remember once we performed above a bowling alley, and a delicious Ives song ended with an exquisite pianissimo, followed by a 10-pin strike."

"I have been concerned about succession for the past 10 years," says Strongman, who now oversees a wide array of artist development and work development activity. "We're a \$1.2M organization, which is quite large for a new works company. We have moved from the edge to the center." When a long-time supporter indicated a desire to honor the company's 30th anniversary with a substantial gift, Strongman conceived the Leadership Legacy Programme. Supported by the anonymous donor's \$250,000 contribution, the initiative will, over the next three years, provide six mid-career arts professionals with a three-month residency at Tapestry as associate managing artistic director. From this cohort, Strongman hopes to identify a permanent staff member to eventually take on the day-to-day responsibilities of managing artistic director, freeing him to concentrate on the company's growing portfolio of international collaborations.

"For me, this is not a job but a calling," says Strongman. "It has been at the center of my life for 30 years. My sense is that generally, today, arts professionals have a much better balance in their lives, and they're probably healthier as a result. I'm not looking to clone myself, but to find someone who has a vision of what can be possible, someone who can help design an infrastructure that will support our strengths and buffet our weaknesses. It sounds very airy-fairy, but it has always been the way we have worked at Tapestry. We have uncovered a process for listening to artists and learning what they need. My interest in human resource management is an extension of the deep and trusting relationships I have built with musicians and singers." 🍷

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Michelle Krisel will be the new general director of the **Ash Lawn Opera Festival**. Her professional career in opera spans 30 years and includes broad experience in all aspects of opera production and administration. In 1996, Plácido Domingo invited Krisel to join him as his special assistant at Washington National Opera. In 2002, he asked her to design and lead the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, to train singers, coach/accompanists, conductors and directors on the verge of international careers. Seeking to broaden opera audiences, she launched a program to attract first-time operagoers, Generation O, to support an annual full-length Young Artist performance at the Kennedy Center Opera House, and which now boasts 13,000 members. Before joining Washington National Opera, Krisel served for a decade as a pianist, vocal coach, accompanist and assistant conductor at opera companies in the U.S. and abroad. The board of directors of the Ash Lawn Opera Festival adopted a resolution appointing **Judy Walker** as general director emeritus in recognition of her 23 years at the helm of the festival.

Keith Cerny has been appointed as the next general director of **The Dallas Opera**. Cerny currently serves as CEO of Sheet Music Plus, managing the day-to-day operations of the award-winning, \$25M revenue company with sales to over 170 countries worldwide. Previously, he served as an executive director at Russell Reynolds Associates, recruiting CEOs and senior executives for universities, conservatories, museums and foundations. From 2004 through 2007, Cerny served

as executive director and CFO of San Francisco Opera. He earned B.A. degrees from the University of California at Berkeley in music and physics with highest honors, an M.B.A. with distinction from Harvard Business School and a Ph.D. in economic development studies/econometrics from The Open University (U.K.). He also completed the Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders-Arts offered by National Arts Strategies and the Center for Social Innovation at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He serves on OPERA America's Strategy Committee.

Des Moines Metro Opera (DMMO) is launching an artistic leadership transition that will ensure the vision and legacy of Founder and Artistic Director **Robert L. Larsen**. This two-year transition will culminate in the 40th anniversary season in 2012. During the transition, Larsen will add the role of "mentor" to "maestro" as DMMO creates new opportunities for collaboration with dynamic conductors and stage directors. Since its founding in 1973, Larsen has conducted and stage directed every performance of the DMMO's 122 productions. He will continue as a stage director for the 2010 production of *Macbeth* in conjunction with director A. Scott Parry, and he will continue to be an active and visible part of the company in his role as artistic director.

Glimmerglass Opera (Cooperstown, NY) announces the appointment of **Francesca Zambello** as general and artistic director commencing September 1, 2010. Prior to this appointment, Zambello was the artistic advisor of San Francisco Opera, where she directed a new

production of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. Her work has been seen at the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, the Bolshoi, Covent Garden, the Munich Staatsoper, Paris Opera, New York City Opera, Washington National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and English National Opera. She has staged plays and musicals on Broadway, at the Royal National Theatre, BAM, the Guthrie Theater, Vienna's Raimund Theater, the Bregenz Festival, Sydney Festival, Disneyland, Berlin's Theater des Westens and at the Kennedy Center. **Linda Jackson** has been appointed as managing director. Jackson has more than 25 years of experience working in the performing arts, 20 of which have been in the field of opera. Prior to joining Glimmerglass Opera, she spent seven years as Connecticut Opera's managing director. She has served as general director for both Berkshire Opera Company and Chautauqua Opera. From 1998 to 2001, she served as the executive director for artist and stage director Robert Wilson's Byrd Hoffman Foundation. She has also served as general manager for 651 ARTS with the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Houston Grand Opera (HGO) has announced two new appointments: **Francis Greep** as head of music staff and music director of the HGO Studio and **Craig Kier** as assistant chorus master. Greep, who will assume the dual positions in fall 2010, has served as head of music and assistant conductor for all productions at West Australian Opera since 2006. From 1996-2005, Greep worked with Opera Australia as a permanent member of the music staff, serving in various roles as

rehearsal coach, assistant conductor, chorus master and children's chorus master. Kier, currently the resident principal coach/accompanist and assistant conductor for The Atlanta Opera, will take on his role at HGO beginning September 2010. Previously, Kier was part of Seattle Opera's music staff, serving in a variety of roles including coach/accompanist, chorus master and assistant conductor. He has also worked at companies including Cincinnati Opera, Opera Colorado, Berkshire Opera, Opera New Jersey, Opera Birmingham and Des Moines Metro Opera.

Los Angeles Opera Music Director **James Conlon** has been awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Los Angeles for his dedication to music and excellence in conducting in Italy and worldwide. The award was presented by the director of the Italian Institute of Culture, Francesca Valente, and by the consul general of Italy in Los Angeles, Nicola Faganello, following Conlon's lecture "Maria Callas and Richard Wagner: A Surprising Couple" at the Italian Institute of Culture as part of Los Angeles Opera's *Ring* Festival. Since 2005, the Institute has awarded its Lifetime Achievement Award to distinguished individuals who best represent Italian excellence in the arts. Conlon will receive a sculpture entitled *Il Tondo* by Tuscan artist Mauro Staccioli, who was commissioned to create this sculpture by the Contemporary Art Museum of San Diego.

On February 25, President Barack Obama presented the National Medal of Arts to 10 recipients for

their outstanding achievements and support of the arts. The National Medal of Arts is a White House initiative managed by the **National Endowment for the Arts** (NEA). Recipient **Jessye Norman** is equally adept performing American spirituals or French *chansons*, as she is for acclaimed operatic performances. A five-time GRAMMY Award winner for her contributions to classical music, she joined Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington and other stellar performers as a recipient of a GRAMMY Lifetime Achievement Award. Norman's non-performance interests focus on assisting others: in particular, her Jessye Norman School of the Arts which provides an after-school, tuition-free program in her hometown of Augusta, GA.

Michael Ching, artistic director of **Opera Memphis** since 1992, moved to Ames, IA with his family in May 2010. The relocation is a result of a new position attained by Ching's wife, Barbara Ching, who has been named chair of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences' English department at Iowa State University. Michael Ching looks forward to taking time off from the administrative side of opera to compose and spend more time with family.

Opera New Jersey is pleased announces the appointment of **Richard Russell** as its new general director. Russell assumed his responsibilities on April 26; he is the second general director of the eight-year-old, Princeton-area company. Previously, Russell was director of marketing for Sarasota Opera, where he worked for the last five years. He holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees

from Indiana University in voice performance and choral conducting. After pursuing a successful performing career, he worked for several technology and financial companies — ultimately achieving the position of vice president and global webmaster for Citigroup's Emerging Markets Sales and Trading Division.

José María Condemi has accepted the position of artistic director at **Opera Santa Barbara**. Condemi made his directorial debut with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, directing Deborah Voigt in *Tristan und Isolde* and most recently the new production of *Ernani* with Salvatore Licitra. His collaborations with contemporary opera composers include directing the workshop premiere of the San Francisco Opera commission *Earthrise* by Pulitzer Prize winner Lewis Spratlan, as well as Hector Armienta's *River of Women* and *The Weeping Woman*.

In a recent board meeting, the **PORTopera** board of directors elected **Ann Elderkin** to serve as president of the organization. Elderkin, a PORTopera board member and a former member of the PORTopera chorus, will succeed Don Head, who served as president for the past six years. She will take office at a pivotal time in the company's 16-year history: This past fall, PORTopera received a \$100,000 challenge grant, prompting the development of an ambitious three-year plan with major goals, including expanding the summer opera festival, adding new performances and educational activities, establishing a guild, increasing the size of the board and completion of the challenge grant.

Skylight Opera Theatre welcomes **Jennifer Samuelson** as marketing director. Samuelson comes to the Skylight after nearly a decade in arts management. Most recently, she served the Bel Canto Chorus as managing director. Prior to Bel Canto, she was the executive director of the Racine Symphony, and also worked for many years in the financial and retail sectors. Her formal training is in music education and arts management.

Washington National Opera (WNO) announces the appointment of **Vesna Gjaja** as director of fundraising, a senior management position leading the company's fundraising programs. Previously WNO's director of individual giving, Gjaja has 20 years of fundraising and marketing experience in nonprofit arts and higher education institutions. Her credentials include serving as the director of development and marketing at Saratoga Performing Arts Center, the associate vice president for development at Towson University and executive vice president of the university's foundation. Additionally, she held the position of interim vice president for advancement at the University at Albany-SUNY. ☺

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Lori Laitman. Photo by Christian Steiner.



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OPERA AMERICA'S SALON SERIES: EXPLORING AMERICAN VOICES

OPERA America's *Salon Series* features live performances of American opera and songs in the intimate setting of the OPERA America office. Presented in collaboration with publisher members, the *Salon Series* showcases the diverse and unique voices of today's most distinguished composers. Mark your calendars now for the 2010-2011 season.

- September 15, 2010: Lori Laitman
- November 3, 2010: Paul Moravec, co-sponsored by Subito Music Corporation
- February 23, 2011: John Musto, co-sponsored by Peermusic Classical
- April 6, 2011: Lewis Spratlan, co-sponsored by G. Schirmer, Inc./Associated Music Publishers 

2010-2011 SINGER WORKSHOPS — SAVE THE DATES

OPERA America's Artistic Services department works with leading professionals in a variety of specialties to produce a series of professional development workshops for artists across the country. These workshops focus on the business aspects of a career. In addition to interactive sessions, the programming allows plenty of time for one-on-one communication.

- October 9, 2010: Boston Singer Workshop, in collaboration with Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Boston and other local members
- October 2, 2010: Philadelphia Singer Workshop, in collaboration with Opera Company of Philadelphia and other local members
- February 13, 2011: Pittsburgh Singer Workshop, in collaboration with Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Theater of Pittsburgh and other local members 

2010-2011 FORUM MEETINGS

Forums allow OPERA America to work with groups of members as full partners in developing ideas and strategies that will advance their work and strengthen the field as a whole. To learn more about participating in these meetings, contact the staff member listed below.

- October 30, 2010: Singer Training Forum
Contact: Megan Young, Artistic Services Director, MYoung@operaamerica.org
- October 31, 2010: Technical/Production Forum
Contact: Megan Young, Artistic Services Director, MYoung@operaamerica.org
- November 6, 2011: Education Forum
Contact: Evan Wildstein, Manager of Education & Adult Learning Programs, EWildstein@operaamerica.org
- January 20-21, 2011: Electronic Media Forum
Contact: Patricia Kiernan Johnson, Marketing & Media Manager, PKJohnson@operaamerica.org
- February 24-26, 2011: National Trustee Forum
Contact: Bill Higgins, Director of External Affairs, BHiggins@operaamerica.org

ONLINE LEARNING

Dead Man Walking, music by Jake Heggie and libretto by Terrence McNally
November 9 – December 7, 2010

Few American operas have had as immediate and lasting an impact as Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Dead Man Walking*, hailed at its 2000 premiere in San Francisco as "a watershed moment in contemporary American Opera" (*USA Today*). It has since been produced in more than 20 cities in nine countries, and tells the gripping story of Sister Helen Prejean and her work as spiritual advisor to a Louisiana death row inmate. The course will look in depth at the roots of the opera and its creators, including Sister Helen, and compare her real life persona to her depiction in the famous film based on her book of the same name. It will also trace the creative process from risky idea to artistic triumph. Participants will study the stirring score in detail, learning how it creates riveting drama by going beyond politics and legal wrangling to get at the emotional core of the human dilemma posed by the death penalty.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, music by Benjamin Britten and libretto adapted by the composer and Peter Pears from William Shakespeare's play.
April 5 – May 3, 2011

When Benjamin Britten needed an opera to reopen the refurbished Jubilee Hall in Aldeburgh in June 1960, he chose *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a play he had long admired, as its source. With its distinct groups of characters and its magical setting, the story offered the composer an opportunity to speak in many voices: the colorful score is by turns ethereal and direct, playful and transcendent. Presented in partnership with the Britten-Pears Foundation, this course will give special insight into Britten's working methods, from fashioning the libretto to working with world-class artists to produce some of the 20th century's most important operas in a small village on the North Sea. The course will also include a detailed musical analysis and interviews with contemporary creative and performing artists.



Frank Corsaro, Lotfi Mansouri, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Marilyn Horne, NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman, Julius Rudel and John Adams. Photo by Henry Grossman.

NEA OPERA HONORS: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors pays tribute to those visionary creators, extraordinary performers and other interpreters who have made a lasting impact on our national cultural landscape. This impact may be based on a lifetime of artistic achievements or a single, uniquely valuable accomplishment. Recipients of the National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors are selected on the basis of nominations from the public. Nominees may include composers, librettists, singers, conductors, designers, directors or, in special circumstances, collaborative artistic teams. Nominations must be submitted online at www.arts.gov. The deadline is November 30, 2010. [e](#)

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Los Angeles Opera's *Das Rheingold*. Photo by Monika Rittershaus.



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National Opera Week: National Coordination, Local Implementation

By Pierre Ruhe

Mark your calendars now: the second annual National Opera Week is October 29 through November 7, 2010 — a full work week bookended by two weekends.

Last year's inaugural celebration of opera across the country — a joint initiative of OPERA America and the National Endowment for the Arts — was both a modest beginning and surprisingly successful. Between November 13 and 22, 2009, some 100 organizations large and small participated in a national "open house."

Each company was encouraged to define open house in a way that best suited the organization and the community it serves. Chicago Opera Theater was one of several that gave "flash" performances of popular arias and ensembles in public spaces — Millennium Park, Union Station, various "L" stops. These were performed by enthusiastic singers in the Young Artists program, all promoted on social media sites and YouTube and, as usual with flash performances, rapturously received.

Elsewhere companies offered open houses and backstage tours, instrument "petting zoos," and even a few discounted tickets to commemorate and participate in National Opera Week (NOW). In its first year, the week was linked to the NEA Opera Honors in Washington, D.C. Video tributes, which told the stories of each of

the honorees, were distributed nationally so that companies could screen them for patrons.

National Opera Week "is really a gestalt approach," says JoAnn LaBrecque-French, director of marketing and communications at Washington National Opera (WNO). "I felt a sense of community among those who participated. It's an ongoing dialogue about our love of opera, and getting something going across the country."

Among WNO's activities for the week was "Opera in All 8 Wards," where singers were deployed to each sector of the city, including serenading members of congress on Capitol Hill.

The initiative is supported in part by a NEA grant to OPERA America as an educational tool. In addition to coinciding with the National Opera Honors, the first open house fell near the beginning of most companies' seasons.

Of that first year, Wayne S. Brown, director of music and opera for the NEA, calls it, "an outstanding response, but it's just the beginning. Opera companies are a series of American stories, and an opera week, where we come together to share what we've been doing, speak of what's out there, speak of what's possible — that's part of how we learn more about our country."



Chicago Opera Theater and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs presented "Pop-up Opera" all around town during National Opera Week — short performances of opera "favorites" in unexpected places in Chicago. Photo from November 18 "Pop-Up Opera" performance at Macy's, Water Tower Place in Chicago.



Zak Krasnow, accompanied by Kirt Pavitt, performs in a Farmers Market as part of National Opera Week. Photo by Robert Godwin and courtesy of The Santa Fe Opera.

From a national perspective, Brown adds, "it's a platform for how opera is being celebrated in particular communities. The coordination is national, but the implementation is local, by design."

Perhaps these how-we-live snapshots are inevitable nowadays, woven into the cultural zeitgeist. With social media and video Web sites like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and oral-history scrapbooks like StoryCorps (broadcast on National Public Radio and archived at the Library of Congress), the notion of publically documenting real life in real time — and, yes, sometimes pausing for milestones along the way — is no longer a fad but a dominant engine of American social interactions.

Indeed, the younger generation of opera fans see it all of a piece.

At 25, Brian Hinrichs has been Madison Opera's communications manager for almost two years. He controls the company's social media pages and sees NOW as another means to "put opera on the radar."

The American opera scene is thriving, he says, "but the quality of work isn't generally known. In Madison, the national week alerts people that we've got great opera but that we're not just a local company — we bring in singers from across the country. We're connected to that national web of great opera."

Hinrichs says he's frustrated at "the traditional mindset that you don't share ideas, that you interact with the public in one direction, which is basically saying 'Buy our tickets.' I'm not an expert, but we try for a lot more give-and-take [via social media], we talk to our fans, get to know them. The concept [of NOW] is so easily understood that it's an easy way to bring more people in."

Those thoughts are echoed by *Washington Post* music critic Anne Midgette, who was perhaps the most nationally visible journalist to write about NOW in 2009. "My instinct is to be cynical about yet another 'national awareness' event," Midgette said recently, "but there's something comforting that opera companies

and the NEA realize they need to engage broader audiences, to get more involved with the broader culture. The fact that the week is piggybacked on the NEA honors gives it some authenticity — the idea that there's a national hall of fame for our best is very compelling."

Following the 2009 open house, OPERA America surveyed participating companies. Everyone knows that a first date isn't really successful unless there's a second. New restaurants might have lofty culinary aims but gauge real-world success on return rates: if people like the meal they'll come back for more. So it seems especially notable that nearly every company that did it in 2009 (of the 44 that took the survey) will do it again in 2010.

Among the replies:

- The award-winning Crane Opera Ensemble, at SUNY Potsdam, wrote: "We used NOW in all of our publicity and it seemed to help us enjoy better coverage with regional media as a result — perhaps because it was so outreach oriented."
- Glimmerglass's Brittany Lesavoy, director of public relations, described "OPERA-tion Quilt" as part of NOW, a program offered to second grade students in the area. "After a presentation on opera," Lesavoy wrote, "the students illustrated their impressions of the art form on pieces of fabric. The fabric squares were combined to create opera quilts, which hung in local grocery stores. A raffle for free opera tickets was offered near all the quilts. We had more than 60 raffle entries, 85 percent of which were not in Glimmerglass Opera's database."

• Virginia Opera's communications director Danielle M. Canonico advised, "Don't stress doing anything complicated if you do not have the time or budget. Make it easy and fun for everyone. We made sure ours [was] an avenue to hear our fans — let them share their insight. It was fun for us and all those willing to chime in. In today's world, everyone still wants to know their voice (or writing) still matters! We let them know we heard them all and we even rewarded the most creative and inspiring."

With any new activity, the organizations that did *not* participate can offer as many insights as those that did. It's an oversimplification, but basically the reasons fell into three categories: the company wasn't performing that week; it lacked preparation time; it lacked staffing or financial resources.

To that end, Opera San José's Margot Helm, an assistant in marketing and development, commented, "I would have enjoyed it more if NOW encouraged more partnerships or something on a bigger scale — a contribution project or multi-group collaboration project. I hope that next year, we'll be able to do something together with the Sacramento Opera and San Francisco Opera companies, to name a few!"

At The Atlanta Opera, education manager Emmalee Iden saw NOW as a chance for "audience development outreach with an educational twist." The 2009 week coincided with its production of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Before they knew about NOW, the company had planned several tie-ins around town, including

lectures at Emory University's Carlos Museum on the Orpheus myth in art, literature and history. With a subtle shift in marketing, that became a NOW-related event.

But a highlight of the *Orfeo* production run, says Iden, came from a plan hatched specifically for NOW. The Atlanta Opera opened the stage doors free to the public, to tour the sets and poke around backstage. Some 200 people R.S.V.P.'d online, leaving their e-mail addresses in the bargain.

The tours proved much more popular than anticipated, and it took four hours to escort everyone who showed up (in small groups of 20) backstage at the Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, which opened in 2007 in an Atlanta suburb.

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"We were surprised at how many people took the tour who'd never been to the opera, or never seen the [newish] theater," says Iden. "A lot of these people ended up buying tickets, more than expected." (There was an added cost to the tours, however: the opera had to pay arts center staff for extra hours.)



T-shirt from Sarasota Opera's "Divas and Dudes" 5K run. Photo courtesy of Sarasota Opera.

The 2010 National Opera Week will be a test for The Atlanta Opera, which will have no mainstage production during that period. General Director Dennis Hanthorn, for his part, sees NOW as "a chance to keep your presence in the community when you're between shows." During the 2010 NOW, the company will be touring smaller cities across Georgia with a portable "studio" show of *Pirates of Penzance*.

"We believe in the holistic nature of the project," says Iden, "and we'll have to be more creative to still be meaningful. When budgets are tight it becomes more difficult, but [like the open house] some of the best ideas aren't the most expensive." ☺

Pierre Ruhe is editor and classical music critic of www.ArtsCriticATL.com, a site dedicated to covering the arts in Atlanta.

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OPERA LEADERS JOIN FORCES

“Glynn Ross had this dream of creating an organization that would serve the opera community, and Carol Fox invited me to the first organizational meeting in Chicago,” remembers Plato Karayanis, who later became general director of The Dallas Opera. “I had no business being there — I was still with Affiliate Artists — but I thought it might be a good place to make some contacts. At the invitation of Carol Fox and the urging of Kurt Herbert Adler, Rudolf Bing came, flanked by his two lieutenants, Herman Krawitz and Bob Herman. They listened as a strong push was made that the Met become a member. They left the room for 10 minutes, and then they came back and agreed. Everyone just cheered.”

During the 1950s and 60s, opera in America experienced extraordinary growth; in just two decades, 30 new opera companies were founded. At the instigation of Glynn Ross of Seattle Opera, opera managers from across the country came to understand that a national organization could help them advance their individual



Looking over the resolutions of the first Opera Director's Conference in Seattle in 1970 are Steering Committee members (left to right) Russell Patterson, general director of Kansas City Lyric Theatre; Robert Collinge, managing director of Baltimore Civic Opera Company, Inc.; Walter Herbert, artistic director of San Diego Opera Company and Houston Grand Opera Association; Rudolph Kruger, manager and artistic director of Fort Worth Civic Opera Association; and Glynn Ross, general director of Seattle Opera.

goals. OPERA America was incorporated in 1970 under an apt (if tortured) acronym: **O**pera **P**roducing **C**ompanies **E**nterprise for **R**elated **A**ctivities. Its first president was Robert Collinge, general director of Baltimore Opera. The National Endowment for the Arts, founded only five years earlier, had just doubled its budget, giving arts professionals from every discipline a reason to be optimistic. OPERA America's first offices were located in Baltimore, but by 1973 the organization had moved south to Washington, D.C., making it easier to engage with policy makers. David M. Baber served as the first executive director.

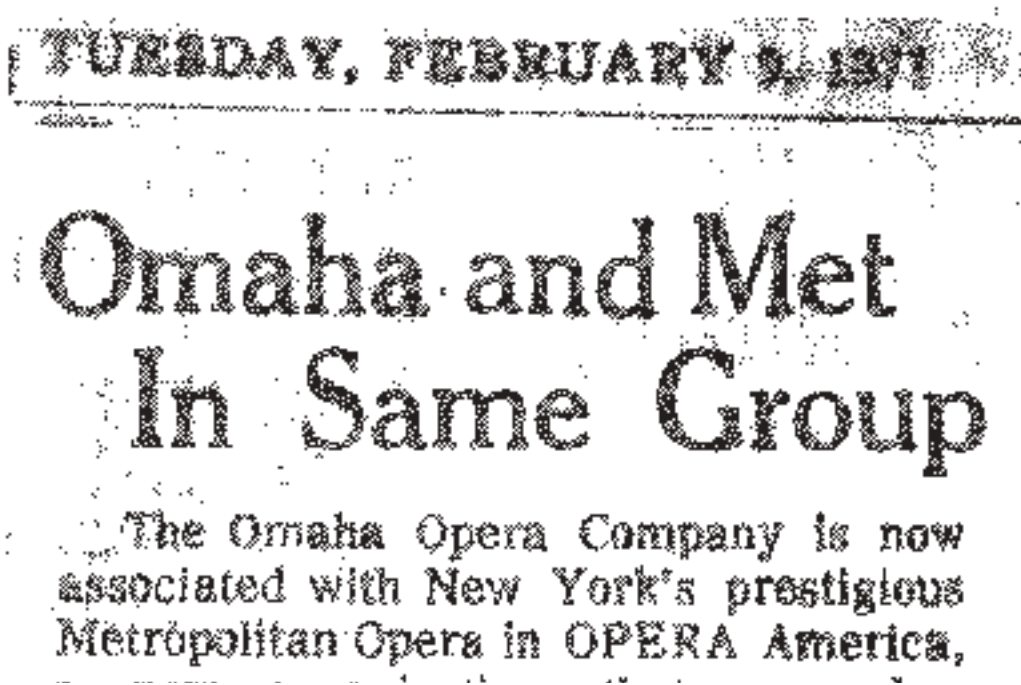
The first annual meeting was held in New York City in 1971, with delegates from 27 companies. Later that year, members met in Kansas City for national auditions. “We set as one of our major aims a program to stimulate a better performance climate for American artists,” Collinge told the *Kansas City Star*. “This is one of the things we

can do. Young artists normally audition at their own expense, running around to where the jobs might be, taking time out from things they might better be doing.” He explained that the singers were nominated by member companies that either employed them or planned to employ them, providing a level of quality control. “It is a difficult thing,” said Collinge, “for each of us to go along in his own way doing his own thing. It is also bloody expensive. Our only hope for survival is cooperation with each other.” Collinge reported later that 75 roles were cast in two days.

There is no doubt in my mind that the flourishing of dozens of new companies in the seventies was encouraged and enhanced by the presence of OPERA America. For me, it is a significant coincidence that Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) and OPERA America were both founded in 1970. My company, like those that came after, had the good fortune to reach adolescence within a family of peers who provided many of the support systems of the family unit. As a fledgling impresario with limited experience, I cannot imagine leading MOT to its present growth without the advice and help of successful and imaginative colleagues who saved me more than once from “reinventing the wheel.”

In the decades before OPERA America, the idea of opera impresarios working together to improve their own companies as well as the cause of opera in general was considered contrary to the image of the “self-sustaining dictator of one’s own operatic fiefdom.” How lucky we are that such trailblazers as Glynn Ross and Kurt Herbert Adler had the vision to fly in the face of that “image” and to use their prestige to bring about an organization devoted to the advancement of opera in our time and on our continent.

— President’s Message, David DiChiera (Profile, 1983)



Much has happened in the world of American opera during the past year. The Metropolitan Opera has added another Zeffirelli production — this time a magnificent Tosca — to its repertoire, while the San Francisco Opera has broken all sales records with its new production of Wagner’s Der Ring des Nibelungen. The Washington Opera has performed in Israel, following the company’s successful 1984 debut at the Edinburgh Festival. More and more in recent years, other nations are inviting American opera companies to perform abroad, a sign of the high respect they hold for our institutions. Here at home, seven world premieres of new operas have been presented by professional opera companies, an extraordinary number for one year. To celebrate its 10th anniversary, the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis this year took the bold step of premiering two new operas, each presented with much acclaim and great success at the box office. What is perhaps most encouraging is the fact that new works are being produced by companies both large and small all over the country, ranging from Houston Grand Opera to Opera Theatre of Rochester.

— President’s Message, Robert Herman (Profile, 1985)

BECOMING THE SERVICE ORGANIZATION FOR OPERA

“Patrick Smith thought I would be a good person to have on the Opera/Musical Theater review committee for the NEA,” says Kevin Smith, who had only recently become general director of The Minnesota Opera. “When it came time to look at the OPERA America proposal, the OPERA America board members on the committee had to leave the room, and I didn’t. I was pretty critical of OPERA America back then. I was young and militant, and I thought OPERA America seemed to be very sleepy, the crazy aunt in the attic. There was a general sense it was about getting together to smoke some cigars, complain about singers and play tennis. Back in the old days the conference was set up like the United Nations. The professional companies would be seated in a semicircle, in alphabetical order, and the affiliates were seated around the periphery. So I sat on that review committee and said OPERA America should get its act together. The next year I got invited to join the board of OPERA America — so when the organization’s proposal came up at the next NEA review, I had to leave the room, too.”

“I remember Jim Ireland was working with opera companies on labor negotiations when I came to Dallas Opera,” says Plato Karayanis, who was the company’s general director from 1977-2000. “I asked him one time if he was going to the OPERA America conference, and he said, ‘There’s no reason for me to go to that.’ I said, ‘What do you mean?’ He said, ‘That’s just a club for general directors.’ Well, that hit me between the eyes. I saw that we were not realizing our potential. We began to diversify our programs to reach out to the other disciplines within the opera company. OPERA America began to put experts in different disciplines on the staff. It really expanded as the members articulated the need. I couldn’t have been happier — OPERA America was finally beginning to fulfill its promise and become a service organization that people in the field could boast about.”

When Glynn Ross first proposed that general directors meet to share ideas and advance mutual interests, according to Robert Collinge, “we were told that if we could get five professional opera producers to agree on any one thing we will have moved the mountain.” The mountain was moved, and within a few decades nearly every professional opera company in the country was represented in OPERA America.

“We had all these intriguing personalities,” remembers David DiChiera. “I wonder how one ever kept them in line. Today many more general directors come to leadership by working their way up through a company, as opposed to those of us who just decided a city should have an opera company. There was nothing for us to work our way through. Personality was a very important factor.”

As start-up companies grew and flourished in communities across America, their leaders required more professional staff to assist in increasingly complex operations. New not-for-profit management programs began to appear in universities, and

visionaries like Danny Newman, whose *Subscribe Now!* was published in 1977, urged opera companies to develop and implement new strategies for doing business. OPERA America began to realize that national coordination could be carried out on a number of levels.

The annual conference, which had for two decades offered a single track of programming focused on the concerns of the general director, began to offer concurrent programming for other professional specialties in 1992. “I remember the San Diego conference as the first time I was really able to connect with that opera industry,” says David B. Devan, now executive director of Opera Company of Philadelphia. “I was associate director of marketing at the Canadian Opera Company at the time. Brian Dickie was the general director, and there were about five of us on the management team who were new at our jobs. It’s something we collectively decided we needed to do. That conference opened my eyes to an entire world. I had been completely unaware of the breadth and depth of the industry. I gained ready access to so many colleagues. And I’ve been going ever since.”

It took some time to educate the field about OPERA America’s expanded mission. In the early 1990s, staff organized a series of meetings for companies within a few hours’ drive of each other. “The regional meetings grew out of a real need to communicate the different relationship we hoped to have with the whole spectrum of opera professionals,” says President and CEO Marc A. Scorca. “In many cases, people were meeting their colleagues from neighboring companies for the first time.” The tagline on the organization’s new letterhead proclaimed its ambition: *The service organization for opera companies.*

However, even that vision eventually proved too small. As DiChiera puts it, “What is an opera company without volunteers or singers or managers? You can’t treat them like pariahs. You have to treat them like colleagues. That was part of growing up as an organization.” In 1998, a new strategic plan affirmed a desire to allocate equal resources to the creation, production and enjoyment of opera, positioning OPERA America as no longer the service organization for opera companies, but *the service organization for opera.*

- 1977** A three-year grant from the Donner Foundation supports the Opera Management Program, with seminars for marketing, finance and other professional specialties.
- 1977** OPERA America develops “Correspondent Company” membership
- 1990** *Music!Words!Opera!*, OPERA America’s K-12 curriculum, is published
- 1990** A new strategic plan paves the way for Affiliate and Individual membership in OPERA America
- 1992** OPERA America holds its first regional meetings
- 1992** OPERA America’s conference offers concurrent programming for multiple professional specialties
- 1993** OPERA America receives \$200,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create the Trustee/Volunteer Resource Center
- 1996** The Singer Services Program is launched with a grant from the Catherine Filene Shouse Foundation
- 1998** Strategic plan affirms equal commitment to creativity, production and enjoyment of opera
- 1999** Gordon Ostrowski, director of opera at Manhattan School of Music, is the first conservatory representative elected to the board
- 2000** John Conklin is the first artist elected to the board
- 2005** Barbara Leirvik is the first trustee elected to the board
- 2009** 40th Anniversary Strategy Committee is convened

In 1984, OPERA America Executive Director Martin Kagan organized a meeting around a new technology that had set the field abuzz: supertitles. “Everybody wanted to get in on it,” remembers Jerry Sherk, who was then production stage manager at San Francisco Opera. “Martin organized a meeting in Toronto of general directors interested in learning how it was done and sharing some knowledge. A lot of GDs said, ‘Yes! This sounds great.’ And then some time after that, pretty much every one of them said, ‘Why am I going to this thing? I don’t want to be the one responsible.’” As Sherk tells it, they sent production or technical directors to the meeting instead. “At the beginning of the meeting, Martin was apologetic because it was just a bunch of substitutes around the table. But all of us were eager to help each other, to find solutions, to share whatever tricks we had learned. It was a wonderful meeting.” So wonderful, in fact, that the group decided to continue to gather on a regular basis.

When Paul Horpedahl, production director of The Santa Fe Opera and current chairman of OPERA America’s Technical/Production Forum, joined the network of opera technical directors in the early 1990s, the group was, for the most part, operating independently of OPERA America. “It was pretty informal, but it got the job done. The people who have been around the longest have always had a strong belief that it’s important to disseminate information to the new kids on the block. Our meetings have gone a long way toward bringing people up through the ranks.”

In the late 1990s, OPERA America began to work more closely with production professionals, inviting them to become a formal part of programming at the annual conference. “At the conference we have the ability to have conversations across departments about issues that affect all of us, like safety,” says Horpedahl. “I think it’s helped general directors to understand what those issues are about. Safety has been the single biggest topic on our table, and we’ve really been able to broaden awareness.”

OPERA America has worked with forum members to develop a number of online resources, including a database with detailed information on production materials for rent, as well as specs of member theaters. “Having staff that can help us put together the programming has really expanded our resources and taken some of the pressure off of committee members.” Still, notes Horpedahl, it’s the opportunities to come together that make the difference. “It’s important for us to keep that face-to-face connection. Ultimately it saves our companies a lot of time and money because it makes the process of production and information sharing much easier.”



A member of the 2009 Glimmerglass Opera production staff. Photo: Peyton Lea/Glimmerglass Opera



Young delegates Macarena Cuenca, Stefanie Davis, Joan Ramirez, Szusannah Balogh and Thibault Sinay at a reception in the Hungarian House of Parliament at Opera Europa's Fall 2009 Conference in Budapest. Photo courtesy of Opera Europa.

“It was in the late 1970s I attended my first OPERA America meeting, and I was the first non-American,” says Ian Campbell, general director of San Diego Opera, who ran the State Opera of South Australia at the time. “I found it a very inspiring group. Very soon after that, I formed an Australian group based on the same model.” Campbell, who would later serve as chairman of OPERA America, continued to attend OPERA America meetings and suggested that the organization create an international membership category.

By the late 1990s, OPERA America had around 30 International Associate Members and began to think about how that group could be expanded. “When you have artists and productions going across oceans, it seemed logical to create a service infrastructure to support that,” says Marc A. Scorca. “In Europe there were various national service organizations, but as Europe came closer together, especially after the introduction of the Euro, it made sense to think about how we could provide service internationally.” OPERA America convened its European members and invited others to participate. It quickly became apparent that the European companies would have to own and advance their own organization. In the service of this larger goal, OPERA America turned over its European members to the new organization, whose first chair was Rudolf Berger.

In 2003, Opera Europa appointed its first executive director, Nicholas Payne. “One of the first things I did was get on a plane to Washington and spend several days at OPERA America,” he says. Like OPERA America, Opera Europa began as an organization centered around general directors, but it gradually evolved services for other specialties. “The second meeting, in Copenhagen, was rather technically oriented,” says Payne. “Out of that came the idea that it would be good for technical directors to meet as a group. Because that was reasonably successful, we started a group for marketing, one for business and finance, one for fundraising. I’ve always tried with these forums to have the impetus come from members and not from me.”

“When I started seven years ago, my primary objective was to increase the membership, which was only 38 companies at the time. It struck me that unless I got over the 100 mark, not only would there not be enough money to pay for anything decent to happen, but also it would not be representative. If we are to be Opera Europa, we must be representative of the north and the south, the west and the east. Now we have 114 members, and we’ve made inroads into Eastern Europe, with Russians, Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, and the Baltic and Balkan countries. OPERA America has been a fantastic example. Right from the start Marc has been very generous with advice and time. Although our ways of doing opera are different, a lot of the issues are curiously the same.”

“The OPERA America board believed opera had a role to play in K-12 education,” remembers Marthalie Furber, who became the organization’s education director in 1980. With her background in curriculum development, Furber was hired to help identify and develop that role. “The timing was auspicious; the art form itself held the key to success. Opera’s interdisciplinary nature along with its expansive body of widely recognized masterworks made it ideal for creating curricula for learning both in and through the arts.”

Furber’s work eventually led to the creation of *Music!Words!Opera!*, a curriculum in which children not only study great opera masterworks but also create, produce and perform their own opera. Today, OPERA America member companies across the country work with local schools to implement the curriculum.

While this integrated approach to arts education is now widely accepted, it was a new and somewhat controversial idea in the early 1980s. On both the national and local level, stakeholders engaged in spirited discussion. Would integration across the curriculum strengthen arts education or dilute it? Could children compose music before they had a solid background in music theory, or could they learn theory as they composed?

In this environment, says Furber, “Putting together a solid research core was a huge role for OPERA America. We worked with representatives of our companies and other groups, including the National Opera Institute, to find programs where kids were creating original opera. We documented them, and we brought in two of the leading cognitive psychologists at the time to align creating opera with the learning process. Then we literally sat down at a meeting with all the pivotal national players — the National Endowment for the Arts, Music Educators National Convention (MENC), National Association of Schools of Music and even the undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Education. We came out of that meeting with an understanding, and MENC appointed an advisory group that worked with us as we began to write the curriculum. In the end, however, just as the art form held the key for the work itself, it was opera educators and members of the opera industry that created and produced *Music!Words!Opera!*”



Opera Theatre of Saint Louis’s 2004 *M!W!O!* program at St. Simon. Photo by Cory Weaver.



Laura Whalen and David Pomeroy in Calgary Opera's 2003 world premiere production of Estacio's *Filumena*. Photo by Trudie Lee.

In 1973, Vancouver Opera became OPERA America's first member from north of the border, followed quickly by other companies scattered across Canada. While participating fully in all OPERA America activity, the Canadian Committee also conducted its own meetings. By the mid-1990s, it became clear that the Canadian group needed to develop a more distinctive national identity. "There was a need for a strong voice for the Canadian opera sector to participate in policy discussions in Ottawa, and that's something OPERA America couldn't do from Washington," says Micheline McKay, who was hired in 1996 as a part-time manager for the Professional Opera Companies of Canada. "That's what drove us to become a little more formalized; my job was mainly about advocacy and government relations. There had been serious cutbacks to arts funding in Canada, and this needed more attention than a volunteer could provide."

One of the great achievements of the organization that became Opera.ca in 2002 was the creation of the *Canadian Opera Creation Fund*, a new works funding program that ran parallel to OPERA America's *The Opera Fund*. Work by Canadian artists had always been a priority for the Canada Council, and McKay worked hard both to secure the Council's funding for the program and to encourage members to explore creation activities. "The relationship with OPERA America and the fact that we had an administrative structure supporting Opera.ca meant we could get more money into the field. The Council was very clear that creation didn't have to be about mainstage; it didn't mean every company had to do the equivalent of *Filumena*. It could be smaller, simpler."

In addition to participating in OPERA America's annual conference, Opera.ca members convene once each year in their own country to focus on public policy, with representatives from the Canada Council in attendance. In 2005, Opera.ca joined with the Banff Centre to launch the bi-annual Banff Opera Colloquium, which serves as something of an internal "think tank," with creation high on the list of priorities. "Our way of working together in Canada is a little bit different," says McKay. "Most of our opera companies are quite isolated from one another geographically. Instead of collaborating with other opera companies, they are often collaborating with the theater company or the dance company."

McKay, who was succeeded by Christina Loewen in 2009, says, "It was a privilege to work with so many creative people who had a common goal, which was to bring wonderful opera to Canada. I was really struck and so impressed by the collegiality of the opera field. Having talked to colleagues in other sectors, I think it is unique to be able to gather people around the big picture. It is the only field that has such a depth of international relations. I think it's partially the nature of the sector, but it's also due in large part to the foresight of OPERA America."

OPERA AMERICA IS AN ADVOCATE FOR THE FIELD

When OPERA America was formed, the decision to locate the office in Washington, D.C. reflected a strong commitment to advocacy. “When the national service organization was created, the National Endowment for the Arts was brand new and its budget was growing every year,” says Marc A. Scorca. “There was a burgeoning community of arts policy experts and enthusiasm about potential.” OPERA America continues to employ a staff member, based in Washington, who represents the concerns of the field before Congress, the White House and federal agencies. “It

is implicit in the mission of a national service organization to advocate for the field,” says Government Affairs Director Amy Fitterer. “It is important to raise awareness around the country and with policymakers about the power of American opera, how it is growing, strengthening education, helping companies become better at increasing visibility in all its facets.”

“The trouble is that we’re all going separately — opera, symphony, dance, theater. This is inefficient, and Congressmen must be bored listening to each group. Each group should not just be talking about what it wants. I think the arts would be better off if we got together and asked for what we really need.”

— John Crosby, OPERA America President,
1985-1990

OPERA America has always worked closely with the NEA to advance the art form, particularly once the Opera/Musical Theater Program was established in 1979. “Up to that point, opera was funded within music, and musical theater within theater,” remembers Jim Ireland, the program’s founding director. “Sondheim was at the time heavily involved with *Sweeney Todd*, and there was the argument: Is it a musical or an opera? You had some very open-minded people interested in ‘crossing over’ — people like Robert Ward, Sheldon Harnick, Carlisle Floyd,

Kenward Elmslie. Hal Prince was starting to direct opera. We realized that we were closer to one another than opera was to symphony or musical theater to theater, and we thought, if we are going to go forward with a new American sung theater, the NEA could help facilitate that. There was a big argument about whether this new program should be created. Hal was in Europe — directing *Evita* or something — and we talked him into flying back for this meeting. He had to take the Concorde — it was a very dramatic entrance. He played it for all it was worth, and we got them to create the program. In those early days, heads of service organizations would work very closely with the program directors. I don’t think anyone was locked into what a government agency had to be. There was a great freedom of exchange to learn what would be best for the field.”

Now that OPERA America is 40, witness the progress of the organization over the years, and watch it develop, by viewing an historical timeline that will be available in June at www.operaamerica.org/OAhistory. As time goes on, this new section of the Web site will also feature video interviews with past OPERA America chairmen and more historical material.

- 1965 The first appropriations bill is signed for the National Endowment for the Arts
- 1972 U.S. Customs rules that costumes imported by OPERA America members can enter the U.S. duty-free
- 1973 OPERA America members testify on Capital Hill about the need to reauthorize the NEA for continued federal funding of the arts
- 1974 National Assembly of State Arts Agencies is incorporated
- 1977 The American Arts Alliance (now the Performing Arts Alliance) was founded by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Dance/USA, League of American Orchestras, OPERA America and Theatre Communications Group
- 1978 OPERA America creates the position of Public Policy Advocate
- 1979 The NEA launches the Opera/Musical Theater Program
- 1979 OPERA America establishes regranting program with funds from the NEA to help opera companies comply with new accessibility requirements
- 1991 OPERA America President and CEO Marc A. Scorca helps draft new legislation for O and P visas, which govern entry to the U.S. for artists and related professionals
- 1997 Wayne Brown is named Music and Opera Director of the NEA
- 2005 NEA launches Great America Voices Military Base Tour
- 2006 American Arts Alliance successfully lobbies for arts facilities to be included in FEMA recovery plans
- 2008 NEA launches the NEA Opera Honors
- 2009 OPERA America leads first National Opera Week



NEA Music and Opera Director Wayne Brown speaks at *Opera Conference 2009: Making Opera Matter*. Photo by Katherine L. Ehle/OPERA America.

How fortunate that the term “opera” is finding new currency among the public as it is increasingly exposed to opera in new and positive contexts. The recent film Moonstruck has been dramatizing to millions that opera-going is a pleasurable experience, even for the uninitiated. Les Misérables is playing in sold-out theaters to cheering audiences who correctly perceive it to be an opera.
 — President’s Message, David Gockley (Profile, 1998)



Great American Voices performance at Camp Lejeune. Photo courtesy of the National Endowment for the Arts.

OPERA America conducted national auditions, in one form or another, from its inception. While many important singers came to the attention of OPERA America members through the program, the organization determined by the mid-1990s that this was not the best way to serve singers. “General auditions don’t work for everyone, and we decided it wasn’t a prudent use of our resources to give an imprimatur to a dozen singers,” says Marc A. Scorca. “Our job is to serve singers more generally.”

According to Diana Hossack, who was brought on to develop and lead OPERA America’s Singer Services program, the field-wide consensus was that many emerging singers are naïve about the business aspects of making a living as an opera singer, and that OPERA America is uniquely positioned to help them.

Although the specific portfolio of services has changed over the years, the program has worked consistently to connect singers with the professionals who train, hire and manage them. OPERA America presented its first Singer Workshop in New York City in 1998; today, these workshops are held regularly in cities across the U.S. In its New York office, the organization now conducts regular panel discussions and master classes, podcasts of which are available to members online at www.operaamerica.org.

The development of the Singer Services program led OPERA America to look at new ways in which it could serve artistic professionals. “Prior to the singer program, they could attend the conference but they had not had a network in the same way that marketing professionals did,” says Hossack. “Suddenly OPERA America was building relationships with artistic administrators, artist managers and singer training professionals because we needed their expertise for the singer program.”

Today, the OPERA America’s Singer Training Forum (STF) meets twice each year to discuss ways to advance the field, both through national programs and strategic work at the local level. Ann Baltz, a member of the STF steering committee and director of OperaWorks (Granada Hills, CA), says, “In the past five to seven years, I’ve started to see things really change. Many other companies are now offering business classes or yoga classes. They are starting to address complete people, not just an instrument. If we’re asking singers to portray human beings, they need to be trained as such. And how can we expect singers to be curious if we’re not curious? I think it is important to open up a dialogue about new ways of approaching what we do. I really believe it’s important to have people of many different mindsets at the table. We should never shy away from fiery discussions.”



Bill Palant, Joyce DiDonato, Gayletha Nichols and Jonah Nigh speak at the September 30, 2009 *Making Connections: Audition Advice for Singers*. Photo by Katherine L. Ehle/OPERA America.

OPERA AMERICA BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER

According to Marc A. Scorca, “Everyone places a very high value on sharing information and learning best practices. This can be done effectively in a number of ways, but bringing people together not only facilitates the exchange of information but provides a basis for relationship building. It is one thing to learn from others’ experience, but when you come together you can discuss joint solutions, new strategies. You can hear from outside experts who stimulate our thinking, develop new strategies and get some buy in to test those strategies. I’m a big believer that we must share information frequently using all the technology we have available to us, but that doesn’t erase the need for people to meet. There is something that happens in person that will never happen through the distribution of spreadsheets.”

In addition to its annual conference, OPERA America facilitates a number of meetings and workshops for opera professionals. Developing a new generation of leaders has always been a priority, and in 2005, OPERA America introduced the Leadership Advance, a pre-conference seminar in which rising professionals learn from industry leaders about every aspect of managing an opera company. Participants also meet for early-morning sessions throughout the conference to discuss the previous day’s programming with guest faculty.

“I met my successor, Tim O’Leary, at OPERA America’s first Leadership Advance,” Charles MacKay remembers. “Having observed him in that setting and then following up later, I realized this was somebody who could take over at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. It’s really key that experienced people be on the lookout for their eventual successors — the enlightened leader should always have someone coming along in the pipeline. The conference is a great place to meet and interact with younger colleagues. It’s a wonderful opportunity to scout for talent. For younger people, it’s a chance to learn who the leaders are, to meet people who might give them a hand.”



Opera Conference 2007.



Opera Conference 2006.

- 1971 First annual meeting is held in New York City, with delegates from 27 companies
- 1979 OPERA America begins management program for marketing, financial and development networks
- 1998 First *New Works Sampler* is held at conference in Minnesota
- 2004 First National Performing Arts Convention, chaired by Marc A. Scorca, is held in Pittsburgh
- 2005 National Trustee Forum is established
- 2006 Singer Training Forum is established
- 2006 *Making Connections* is launched in OPERA America's New York Office
- 2008 Electronic Media Forum is established



The Marketing/PR Network Dinner at *Opera Conference 2005*. Photo by Katherine L. Ehle/OPERA America.

Some previous Leadership Advance participants now head opera companies, and recognizing the value of their intensive time together, they expressed a desire to continue the conversation. OPERA America responded by creating opportunities for new general directors to convene occasionally around selected topics. “The new general directors meetings have been so beneficial in that we are discussing real issues in real time,” says William Cole, executive director of Opera Cleveland. “More importantly, the forum allows for solutions to be formulated. The face-to-face time with peers is critical when dealing with challenges that seem to come at a faster clip and certainly with greater complexity and more at risk.”

The New General Directors group is just one example of a forum facilitated by OPERA America. These discussions are organized in response to member need, and they vary in frequency and format. The Technical/Production Forum, Singer Training Forum, National Trustee Forum and Electronic Media Forum each have two annual meetings, and will occasionally convene by phone around important issues between meetings.

While face-to-face meetings are ideal, conference calls provide a way for members to come together without a lot of fuss, which can be essential in times of crisis. In late 2008, as the economy began to plummet, OPERA America initiated a series of conference calls. “There was a general sense that people needed to huddle with their peers to exchange ideas about what was transpiring and how they were adapting to the significant downturn,” says Scorca. “We use the term ‘action-oriented think tank,’ which some feel is an oxymoron. We didn’t just want to report on bad news. We talked about solutions. How can you make cuts that people will not see and hear? How is the board reacting to the situation? What are your strategies for retaining donors? Beyond serving the individual opera company, conversations with our peers allow us to affirm that we all believe opera is the richest possible reflection of the multimedia global world we live in, a way to bring people together around timeless human stories. It is important for us to affirm belief in opera with colleagues. We have goals for opera that are bigger than our goals for any single organization.”

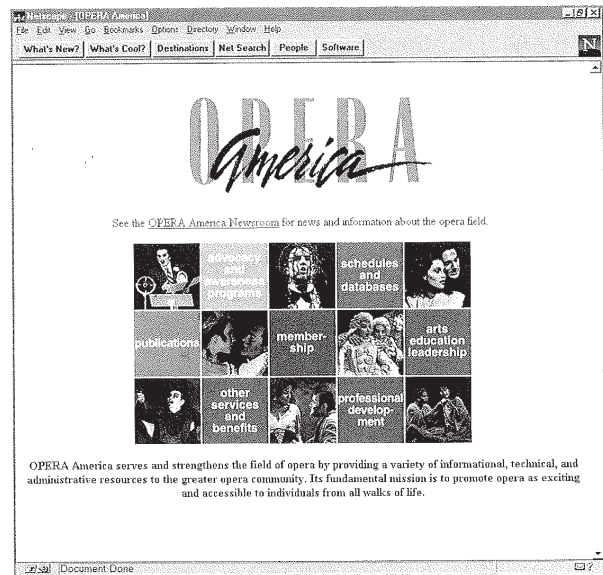
OPERA AMERICA COLLECTS, ANALYZES AND DISSEMINATES INFORMATION

It is fashionable to talk about the Information Revolution: how new technology and scientific advancements are allowing for the creation of more and more data with breath-taking speed. Like many revolutions, this one has a down side: with so much to know and no more time with which to absorb it, we are in danger of being overwhelmed. This information overload is creating the science of information management. OPERA America is engaged in this activity: we sort through reams of data with the needs of our constituency in mind, and create a digest for the busy consumer of that data. One example of this process is Newsline; the next step might be the production of electronically-transmitted news through computers forming a kind of bulletin board, newspaper and forum...

While it may seem futuristic, new technology can allow for new forms of communication across the entire field, via electronic networks. Some day, opera professionals will be able to exchange information and get answers for all kinds of questions rapidly and efficiently at the touch of a key. The Information Service is in contact with several arts groups, both here and abroad, that currently are experimenting with electronic link-ups; the membership will be kept posted on these exciting communication possibilities.

— Arthur Smith (Newsline, 1992)

In September 1990, the Metropolitan Opera's National Council decided it no longer wanted to administer the Central Opera Service (COS), which had for some 35 years served as a clearinghouse of opera information, from production histories to English translations. "That was an important opportunity," says Plato Karayanis. "It served to make OPERA America the voice for the field, the go-to resource for anything about opera in America." Among other things, OPERA America inherited COS files on the North American production history of some 35,000 operas, which contain performance records, photos, reviews and other materials.



OPERA America's Web site, 1996.



OPERA America's Web site, 2010.

- 1990 \$150,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation allows OPERA America to absorb and expand the Central Opera Service
- 1991 *Newsline*, a publication with articles and news about the field, replaces the bulletin *Intercompany Announcements*
- 1996 OPERA America Online is launched with a \$300,000 grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- 1999 The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awards OPERA America \$300,000 for continuing expansion of online services
- 2000 *The Operas of Verdi*, a 10-week course taught by Roger Pines, launches OPERA America's *Online Learning* program
- 2000 \$350,000 grant from American Express for a three-year audience research study
- 2006 *Opera Source*, an interactive, expanded version of *The Career Guide for Singers*, makes its debut
- 2007 *Opera America*, a new quarterly magazine, is launched
- 2008 Podcasts give members across America access to programming in OPERA America's office
- 2009 *North American Works Directory* makes information on more than 1,000 works available
- 2009 Webcasts (available at www.operaamerica.org) offer new learning opportunities for opera professionals

At the same time, new technology promised new ways to organize and share information. By 1992, OPERA America had an e-mail address. In the fall 1995 *Directory of Professional Company Members*, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Delaware, Opera Memphis and Washington Opera were the first companies to provide Web site addresses. A few years later OPERA America, with generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, began to develop Web resources to serve its membership, including the *Season Schedule*, which continues the important performance documentation begun by the COS. By the 1996 conference, prototypes of a *Membership Directory*, *Artist Database* and *Set and Costume Directory* were available on OPERA America's Web site.

Today, the site is tightly integrated with nearly all of the organization's services. "I see it as a continuum," says Marc A. Scorca. "The Web site provides a lot of nuts and bolts and allows members to audit meetings they might not be able to attend. While the archive does not generate creativity in the way that meetings can, it can transmit the wisdom that results from the discussions."

"I just finished watching OPERA America's webinar on taxing foreign persons," wrote Jeff Couture, finance director of The Minnesota Opera, recently. "It was excellently done. I really appreciated that it has been archived so that we can gather a small group of staff to educate everyone as they deal with incoming foreign artists. This is a complex subject and one that it isn't easy to get information about. The issue is not common enough, even in a large metropolitan area, to have this subject show up as typical seminar fodder."



Toni Morrison delivers the Keynote Address at *Opera Conference 2005: Diverse Voices* in Detroit, MI. Photo by Katherine L. Ehle/OPERA America.

Opera Conference 2005: Diverse Voices was cited by the National MultiCultural Institute for “its visionary leadership in creating a national dialogue... to promote and value diversity in the performing arts and encourage outreach to culturally diverse communities.”

The 2005 conference, held in Detroit, featured the world premiere of Richard Danielpour and Toni Morrison’s *Margaret Garner*. “We always try to capitalize and promote what is unique about the company that is hosting, and Michigan Opera Theatre had always done a really good job of engaging with the various communities,” says Diana Hossack, who was OPERA America’s managing director at the time. “In some ways the theme was a natural. However, it really challenged all of us as we put the conference together, because so much of the material was new to us, both as an industry and as a service organization. At one point there was almost a revolt among the staff because we didn’t feel comfortable calling our networks to ask about issues of diversity when we knew nothing ourselves.” OPERA America brought in a consultant to lead a staff retreat and made connections with other national organizations to assist with planning. The result was a conference like no other. “As we asked questions we realized diversity and inclusion touched us in a number of ways. It’s the one conference where we did breakout sessions not by specialty, budget level or region, but by random groups. We felt it was important to look at our own views and biases.”

“I’ve always believed that the arts can bring people together,” says Michigan Opera Theatre General Director David DiChiera. “We always have to see our work in the context of making our community stronger, more connected, and a better place to live. The moment I started the company I was always looking for African American artists. I wanted the audience to see themselves on the stage. But that’s only the beginning. It saddens me that such a large proportion of our resources goes into getting things on the mainstage. I’d like to see the same amount go toward our work in the schools, in the community. That’s what will determine how we develop as a culture, as an art form.”

OPERA AMERICA NOT ONLY SERVES, IT LEADS.

As a service organization, OPERA America has developed the lion's share of its programs in response to requests by the field at large. However, in a few key instances, OPERA America's leadership has taken a more activist role. The push to create a program in support of new works was one important example of this.



Houston Grand Opera's production of Monk's *Atlas*. Photo by Jim Caldwell and courtesy of Houston Grand Opera.

"The impetus came from the top down," says David DiChiera, who remembers being horrified when he realized that only one new opera was produced in 1979. "Quite a few people were adamantly against our funding new works. They thought that once you began distributing money to members you would create a tremendous amount of friction, that you could destroy the organization. But it seemed we had to do this. We finally got it through. I remember it like yesterday; it was a very emotional period."

"It gave companies a real opportunity to show to their boards that there was money available to cushion any budgetary negativity of doing new work," remembers David Gockley. "I know it worked for us in Houston. It added prestige to projects, as well as badly needed dollars. There was a lot of interest in the field around new works at that point. Smaller companies were coming in, and the OPERA America membership began to broaden to include the American Music Theater Festival, Music-Theatre Group; the idea of new work was in the air. I remember meeting with some dramaturgical types and got interested in involving Meredith Monk in what turned out to be *Atlas*. It was a fascinating foray into what opera could be."



HGOco. Photo by Janice Rubin.

A NATIONAL OPERA CENTER

The national office is run by Ann Darling, the executive director, who has a professional staff of three, a program director, the American Arts Alliance Coordinator and a secretary/bookkeeper. The office is four small rooms in a quite un-glamorous Washington building, where a sort of semi-controlled hysteria seems to reign. The size of the space would be restrictive in itself, but since it is crammed with back-to-back desks and tables and cardboard boxes and file cabinets and is crisscrossed with telephone cords, a certain physical agility must be a requisite for working there.

— Pamela Rasp (1978)

As OPERA America grew to serve its expanding membership, it went through a succession of office spaces in Washington, D.C. In 2005, as another lease came to an end, the organization considered its options: renew the current lease, look for another place in Washington, or reposition itself in New York City, the crossroads of opera in North America.

“At first, I was quite cautious about the prospect of moving to New York. For 35 years OPERA America had seemed to be doing good work and enjoying a strong connection with the field from its Washington, D.C. base,” says Charles MacKay, who was then general director of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and beginning his term as chairman of OPERA America’s board. “But the more we probed the idea, the more it started to make sense. General directors, artistic administrators, even trustees go regularly to New York for meetings — to hear singers, to see productions — and OPERA America would develop even stronger connections with member companies.”

“I remember the board meeting where we asked, ‘What would clinch the deal? What could we do to make this really positive for members?’ That’s when the idea of audition space came up. All of us struggle to find spaces that are affordable and still enable us to evaluate the sound, the amplitude, the quality of a voice. So that was the turning point.”

With the support of the membership, board and staff began to think about what else might be included in the Opera Center: coaching rooms, a business center, meeting space. In 2005, OPERA America moved to an office that provides a portion of that ideal portfolio: a meeting space, some workstations, a library, room for intimate gatherings and performances. This has allowed the organization to establish a presence in New York while working toward the larger goal.

“We see the Opera Center as an opportunity to strengthen our presence in New York, to strengthen our relationship with member companies, and to strengthen the field of opera tremendously for the future,” says Marc A. Scorca. “The Opera Center will give every member a place where they can comfortably conduct essential business. It will also give the field a sense of identity, a sense of place that will allow us to advance other agendas.”



Ben Bloomberg and Tod Machover present excerpts of Machover’s *Death and the Powers* at OPERA America’s March 31, 2010 Salon Evening. Photo by Katherine L. Ehle/OPERA America.

For more than two years now, our country has been obsessed by the “R” word. First, it preoccupied the economists, who spent countless hours debating, “Are we in a recession?” Then, as if by self-fulfilling prophecy, it swept the country.

What, you ask, does this have to do with the state of opera? Those of us who run opera companies know the answer is simple. For although opera, by nature, deals with the lofty and the sublime, in reality we operate as businesses — businesses with employees to pay, revenue projections to meet and boards of directors to answer to. Indeed, many of our companies have found it difficult to respond to today’s economic challenges. After all, opera is an exceptionally expensive enterprise to undertake, one that, even in the best of circumstances, is difficult to balance successfully.

So how, as a field, do we come out on top? The answer, my friends, is simple. It lies before our very eyes. It fills our ears at every turn. It moves within us each day. It is our product.



Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of Glass's *Satyagraha*. Photo by Tony Romano.

What we have in opera is something special. It's sexy. It's fun. It's like no other art form, and at the same time, it's like every other art form. It takes the most fundamental human emotions and weaves them into scintillating story lines that illuminate, educate, entertain and amaze. What more could we ask from a product? What more could our audiences ask? Perhaps this is why opera has not suffered in these times as much as some other art forms. Perhaps this is why, despite declining public and private support, our audiences continue to grow and clamor for more. Surely there is no other recreation that gives one more for the money...

And yet, the field has endured its share of hardship, as well. Many companies have been forced to plan conservative seasons characterized primarily by smaller-scale productions, to borrow existing productions rather than building new ones ... and to postpone creative artistic ventures that would otherwise stretch our imaginations. While such measures provide short-term relief, they are not the ingredients by which the vitality and the longevity of the art form will be nurtured...

We are not yet out of the woods. The true effects of the recession and its aftermath have not been fully felt. The next few years will be particularly crucial. And so, I believe the challenges before us are clear: to weather the fiscal storm, to adopt a positive attitude that tells the world that what we do and what we offer is unique, exciting and indispensable, and to prepare for the future by creating an environment that is reflective of our times and of our changing society.

— President's Message from Ardis Krainik (Profile, 1991)

LOOKING FORWARD

Every organization has to have a clear, focused sense of why it exists, where it wants to go and how it wants to get there. It seems to me that OPERA America has a more important role than it ever has in the way it has evolved. The organization has, to a greater extent, become a setter of best practices, with a pool of experts that can assess issues that individual members may face. The balance between being a service provider and a leader is a delicate, complex one.

One challenge facing the performing arts organizations in general is the need to engage more deeply with the cities in which they reside. The breadth and depth of cultural service we are all in existence to provide really needs to be explored and understood and applied if we are to fulfill our mission. In developing a new strategic plan for OPERA America, we have sought the counsel of as broad a group as possible. We hope that our new strategy will be embraced by the whole membership of OPERA America, and will help galvanize all of us, OPERA America and its members alike, into working tirelessly to make our wonderful art form of opera indispensable to all the communities that we serve.

— Anthony Freud

General Director, Houston Grand Opera; Chairman, OPERA America

Photo credits pages 24 and 25: Marc A. Scorca, Jane Hill and Ian Campbell at *Opera Conference 2004*. • Ernest Adams, Aurelio Fabiani, Glynn Ross, Rudolph Kruger and Dr. Arturo di Filippi in the 1970s. Photo by Leon Trice. • Charles MacKay and Peter Gelb. Photo courtesy of The Santa Fe Opera. • Marc A. Scorca and Russell Patterson. • Beverly Sills and Plato Karayanis. Photo courtesy of Plato Karayanis. • Seattle Opera Founding Director Glynn Ross with Valkyrie Jeanne Cook and Fafner the Giant Noel Mangin on a Seattle street to promote the 1978 *Ring des Nibelungen*. Photo by Dale Wittner. • Anthony Freud speaks at *Opera Conference 2009*. Photo by Katherine L. Ehle/OPERA America. • The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation receives the “Spotlight on Opera” award at *Opera Conference 2002*. • The OPERA America staff in 1990. • Luciano Pavarotti and David Gockley at Houston Grand Opera’s 1982 Opera Ball. Photo courtesy of the Houston Grand Opera Archives. • Bob Heuer and Robert Herman. Photo courtesy of Florida Grand Opera. • Bernard Uzan, David DiChiera and Mark Flint following Michigan Opera Theatre’s world premiere production of DiChiera’s *Cyranos* in 2007. Photo by John Grigaitis. • OPERA America’s Technical/Production Committee. • John Crosby and Igor Stravinsky in the first Santa Fe Opera Theater. Photo by Tony Perry. • Kevin Smith and the OPERA America staff at *Opera Conference 1999*. • Ardis Krainik and Michael Jordan. Photo by Dan Rest/Lyric Opera of Chicago.

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Angela Brown

Opera From a Sistah's Point of View

International opera star Angela Brown is a trail blazer on a mission to bring opera to everyone. Her witty and inspired solo show, *Opera From a Sistah's Point of View*, dispels the common myths of opera. Angela's zany commentary unravels convoluted opera plots with humor and creates a fresh awareness of the ethnic, geographic and socio-economic diversity portrayed in opera characters. Filled with showstopping arias, poignant art songs and moving spirituals, Angela Brown opens new minds, hearts and ears to the beauty and imagination of opera - from a sistah's point of view.

Opera From a Sistah's Point of View is suited for audiences of all sizes and ages with adaptable program length ranging from 30 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes.

"Capturing the attention of 800 middle school students for 90 minutes is quite a feat... even the boys left the auditorium smiling and humming "Summertime"... their teachers were in a happy state of shock. At her sold-out evening concert two days later, the diverse, hometown audience was equally entranced!"

Glenn White

Consultant, Indiana University Purdue University 40th Anniversary Events
Indianapolis, Indianapolis

"The children loved listening to her and described her singing as a lasso that was tossed out, a rope which wrapped around the audience, and then a tug that pulled them back in! They were absolutely mesmerized by Ms. Brown's glorious singing and witty, charming stage presence, and they were beaming all the way back to school."

Marti Parker

Early Middle Childhood Music
Alexander II Magnet School - Macon, Georgia

"Angela's captivating performance of *Opera From a Sistah's Point of View* for over 2,000 Buffalo Public School students was a life changing experience for many of them. The students were on the edge of their seats during the performance taking in every note and interesting background story told by Angela."

Jennifer J. Parker

Co-Chair, Cultural Giving Legacies Initiative
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Celebrating Twenty Years of Leadership: Marc A. Scorca

"I can't let the moment pass without extolling the virtue of our president and CEO, and saluting his incredible years of inspiring leadership, not just for opera, but all the arts. He is one of the icons, one of the real bright lights in the business. The fact that we have his brainpower, knowledge and charismatic leadership to guide our organization is a huge boost to the field of opera. On a personal level, I feel he brings out the best in me; I always try to do better when I'm around Marc. I look to him for guidance, encouragement and reality checks. He's a magnet for a tremendous professional staff, one that is always becoming richer in terms of intellect and expertise. Thanks to Marc's leadership and all that he's done to advance the field, I know the next 20 years will be even better!"

— Charles MacKay

It gives us great pleasure to pay tribute to Marc A. Scorca on the occasion of his 20th anniversary with OPERA America. It is thanks to Marc's far-reaching vision and tireless effort that the 40-year-old national service organization is positioned not only to serve, but to lead, the entire field of opera — administrators, artists, volunteers and audience members. During Marc's tenure, the organization's membership has grown from 120 opera companies to nearly 2,500 organizations and individuals. Recognizing that opera is truly a global art form, he supported the establishment of affiliated Opera.ca (Toronto) and Opera Europa (Brussels), and he continues to work closely with both organizations.

A tremendous advocate of collaboration, Marc has not merely concerned himself with the challenges facing the broadest constituency within the field of opera, but within the performing arts in general. Working with leaders of other arts service organizations, he organized the Performing Arts Research Coalition, National Music Coalition and the National Performing Arts Conventions of 2004 and 2008. Marc has served as an officer of the American Arts Alliance, now Performing Arts Alliance, for most of his 20 years at OPERA America.

When Marc joined OPERA America, the organization was completing *Opera for the Eighties and Beyond*, its first re-granting program in support of the development of new works. Marc oversaw two subsequent initiatives that built on the learning from this important program: *Opera for a New America* and *The Next Stage*. Most significantly, in 2000 OPERA America launched *The Opera Fund*, a permanent endowment dedicated to supporting new works and audience development activities.

In 2005, working closely with the board of directors, staff and other advisors, Marc led OPERA America's relocation from Washington, D.C. to New York City as the first step in establishing a national Opera Center. Already, the move has increased communication and collaboration with and among members both locally and nationally.

With his tremendous knowledge of the field, Marc is able to provide important context regarding the challenges faced by any one company. Each of us has, at one time or another, benefited from his analysis and counsel. Marc regularly leads strategic planning retreats for opera companies and other cultural institutions internationally, and participates on panels

for federal, state and local funding agencies, as well as for numerous private organizations. We are fortunate indeed to have him at the helm of the service organization for opera.

Anthony Freud, Chairman, 2008-present
 Charles MacKay, Chairman, 2004-2008
 Ian Campbell, Chairman, 2001-2004
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 Plato Karayanis, Chairman, 1993-1997
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 David DiChiera, President, 1979-1983

It is hard to sum Marc up in a few sentences. For me, he has been a priceless colleague, guide and friend. His brain seems effortlessly to encompass (in no particular order) intelligence, sanity, logic, humor, analysis, passion, energy, focus, humanity and commitment. His belief in and devotion to our art form drives his determination to ensure that opera and opera companies not only survive, but thrive. He sees the bewildering hurdles and tumultuous change that have confronted the opera business over the last 20 years as opportunities to be eagerly embraced. His long and immensely fruitful symbiosis with OPERA America has truly been beyond price. Happily, we can look forward to his next 20 years as our president with eager anticipation and immense gratitude.

— Anthony Freud

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OPERA America's Annual Fund is the organization's most significant source of unrestricted support and plays an important role in our ability to provide landmark services that promote the creation, production and enjoyment of opera. As we enter our fifth decade of service to the field, gifts to the Annual Fund will continue to play a critical role in the enrichment of professional development opportunities through the OPERA America Learning Laboratory, which combines online resources with face-to-face convenings that focus on electronic media, trustee governance, singer training, new works, technical and production issues, arts education and skills development for emerging opera leaders.

The development of these activities would not have been possible without the commitment of our generous Annual Fund donors. We are also deeply appreciative of the support from the Anniversary Celebration Committee for their endorsement of our work and their dedication to the continued growth of the field.

The Anniversary Celebration Committee represents a coast to coast salute to the value of OPERA America's services and the remarkable leadership of President & CEO Marc A. Scorca. The Committee will remain in formation throughout this dual anniversary year. When complete, the entire Anniversary Celebration Committee will be recognized in the winter issue.

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LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD: CAREER SERVICE AWARDS

Each year at the annual conference, OPERA America recognizes general and artistic directors who are celebrating significant anniversaries at their opera company.

Celebrating a decade of service are Eric Salzman, Center for Contemporary Opera; Paula Cebula, DuPage Opera Theater; Neal Goren, Gotham Chamber Opera; Larry Desrochers, Manitoba Opera; James Meena, Opera Carolina; Kyle Marrero, Pensacola Opera; Christopher McBeth, Utah Symphony | Utah Opera; Giorgio Magnanensi, Vancouver New Music; and Parvan Bakardiev and Margaret Ann Pent, Wichita Grand Opera.

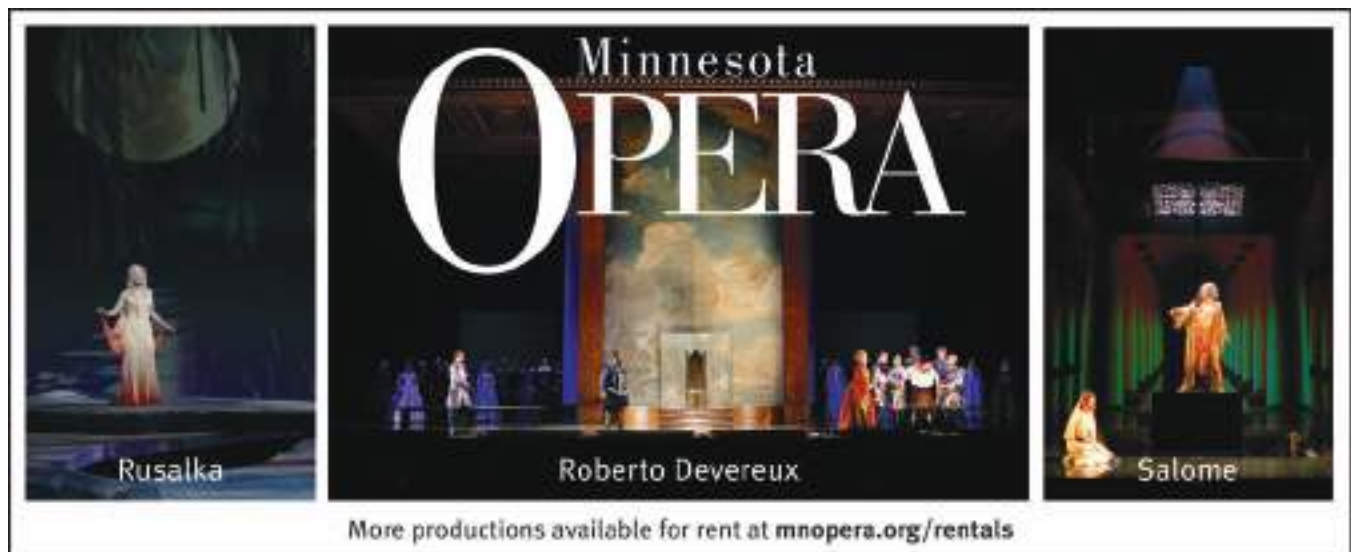
In addition, five individuals with very different backgrounds will celebrate a quarter-century at five distinctive companies. In the past 25 years, each has witnessed an enormous amount of change in his or her company, as well as in the field at large. Here are a few of the high points — in their own words.

Patricia K. Beggs, General Director & CEO, Cincinnati Opera
Cincinnati Opera was founded by two enterprising women who wanted to establish a professional opera company, provide summer work for the Cincinnati Symphony and goose up attendance at the Zoo — voilà, the Cincinnati Summer Opera. The Met was the only other operating opera company at the time and their artists were available, so they would pack up and come to Cincinnati. For the first 50 years, the company performed outdoors, at the zoo. James Levine conducted our last performance there in 1971 — *The Barber of Seville* with Roberta Peters. When we moved to Music Hall the following year,

we began producing on a much grander scale. We always had great singers, chorus and orchestra, but with a European-style, 3,600-seat opera house, the overall level of production had to be elevated.

I came to Cincinnati Opera in 1985 as director of marketing, with an MBA, a banking career, a love of opera and zero music background. Then-General Director Jim deBlasis took a risk in hiring me and for that I will always be grateful. Attendance was at 53 percent of the house. With the blessing of Jim and the board, my approach was to sell the “benefit” of the opera experience. The brand message was relevant, accessible and fun. We used nontraditional media and a complete departure in printed materials from most in the industry. Because we are a compact summer festival, I was able to focus on a season theme with pop culture resonance like “Fatal Attraction” or “Love on the Rocks” or “Pretty Women.” We went from selling half the house to selling out.

Since 1997 when I was named managing director, our priorities have been to increase quality and connect with the community. Working with Artistic Directors Nic Muni and Evans Mirageas, we have more than doubled the budget and mounted extraordinary productions. Embracing diversity, building bridges, offering opportunities for public dialogue and ensuring that the company is welcoming — these are all essential elements of our company’s philosophy. We’ve made a significant investment in community programming, and work to create strong partnerships with other arts and social service organizations.



I'm not a solo artist. Opera is by nature collaborative. It's about bringing many disparate parts together in a seamless, transformative and unforgettable experience. At Cincinnati Opera, our success is due to an amazing and dedicated *team* of people — both board and staff — with whom I have the great good fortune to work.

Jonathan Pell, Artistic Director, The Dallas Opera

I had come quite often to Dallas Opera in the early 70s, when I was living in the Midwest right out of college. I heard some unbelievable, historic performances — Jon Vickers, Alfredo Kraus, Marilyn Horne, Magda Olivero. A few years later, when I went into artist management, the first time I had to travel for my job was to see a number of my clients in *Turandot* at Dallas Opera. Then, four years later, when I was asked if I would be interested in working there, I thought, “My God, Dallas Opera — a company I have known, admired and respected for years. How can I say no?” I kept my apartment in New York, though, thinking I'd only stay for two or three years.

I was extremely fortunate to have five years with Nicola Rescigno, the company's first artistic director, who was truly my mentor. His vision of The Dallas Opera has always been to do the best opera that we could produce, rather than just the best opera that we could afford. That dedication to finding creative solutions when times were economically tough was ingrained in me from the beginning. It was never a question that we would reduce the strings, or sacrifice the musical and theatrical integrity. We never said, “We can't afford that singer.” We dreamed as big as we could and then found a way to make it happen. The emphasis on high musical values was always there. The time was always taken to thoroughly rehearse. That's why so many great singers wanted to come to Dallas — they knew that they would have the time to prepare and thus be able to give their best. In those days, in many regional companies, things were thrown together, what we used to jokingly refer to as “add water and stir” opera, but people from all over the world wanted to come sing here.

When I first came, the opera had the affectionate sobriquet La Scala West. It was all imported Europeans, down to the smallest comprimario role. I'm very proud that we've been able to bring a lot of American singers very early in their careers. Renée Fleming made her debut here in 1992, Cecilia Bartoli in 1993. Clifton Forbis began singing in our chorus, and I kicked him out after a couple of years because he was too good for that. He came back to open our new opera house in the title role of *Otello* in 2009. It is easy to engage great stars in their signature roles, but what I find most exciting is to offer them parts they've never thought about singing, and also finding young, lesser-known singers who can come to Dallas and make their debuts with the company before they become known to a wider public.

Robert M. Heuer, General Director, Florida Grand Opera

I met Bob Herman, who was then general manager, at an OPERA America conference. We got to know each other over a couple of years and in 1979, he called and asked if I would consider joining the company. Even then he was beginning to talk about retirement; he had reluctantly come to Miami to help the company when the founder died unexpectedly. Over the next two years he was a wonderful mentor, and after five years I became assistant general director. When he retired in 1985, I became general director.

There have only been three general directors in the 70 years of this company, and I think each of us was the right person at the right time. Arturo di Filippi was really a showman. Bob Herman, having worked under Rudolf Bing, had connections to singers and designers that brought a certain New York sophistication. I've really made an effort to get involved in the community and expand the base of support beyond the wealthy group that has been around since the early years. About 50 percent of our audience now is Hispanic. We do titles in Spanish and English. We've been open to innovation, to reaching out and speaking the language of the community, literally and figuratively. We also have a strong representation of Hispanic singers, many of whom have

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come from Miami. Our entire box office staff is bilingual, as is about 50 percent of development staff.

One of the first things Bob Herman did when I arrived was to establish a committee to look at the need for a performing arts center in Miami. It was something we continued to pursue, and it only took 30 years to make it happen. We're very proud. The artists love performing there and the audience loves coming.

I'm also proud of our Young Artists Program. Bob allowed me to get that started about a year before I became general director, in 1984. Over the years it continued to develop. I think it's not good enough to train singers if we're not going to give them jobs later. That's another connection to the community. A lot of patrons get to know our young artists during their years in the studio. They watch what happens to their careers, and when they come back there is a sense of pride. I think the program has been important both in raising the artistic level and in building relationships.

I probably wouldn't be here if it weren't for an OPERA America conference. I've always felt that one of the great things about OPERA America is that it gives people the ability to network, and not only when you're thinking about a new job. The connections help you do your job better, whether you are a general director looking for a co-production or a marketing person wanting to know how a specific title sold.

**Marshall Pynkoski and Jeannette Lajeunesse Zingg,
Co-Artistic Directors, Opera Atelier**

We never intended to start an opera company. It just took on a life of its own. We were interested in studying Baroque dance in Paris, so we took jobs at the Moulin Rouge to facilitate a year-long residence. It was a fantastic contract that allowed us to live in Paris and, in our spare time, do our own research in the archives of many theaters. We came back to Toronto with an amazing amount of information about the dance and operas of the 17th and 18th centuries. We started by doing demonstrations in a museum with a cassette player while developing a working relationship with Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra.

What most people don't understand is that there was an extensive, elaborate form of dance notation in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is extremely exact. This is how dancing masters were able to make a living — they would create and collect notated dances and go to peoples' homes to teach them, so they would know what would be danced at court that season. It is not a question of guesswork, but of learning to read the notation. That is something Jeannette has really focused on while I have travelled internationally studying Baroque staging and acting techniques. However, we are not interested in being a museum, in reproducing dancing or staging as artifacts. That could be an interesting exercise but not necessarily a creative one. We are creating historically sensitive productions that are brand new.

Things moved very quickly, in part because it is a very small world. We hired a singer who introduced us to Marc Minkowski, a young conductor who was developing an international reputation. We started hearing from agents. It was our association with Marc that led to our first major European engagements. David Gockley heard about the company and invited us to come to Houston to present *Dido and Aeneas* in 1995 and then brought us back to work with the studio artists. Now we do two productions in Toronto every year, with a major tour every second or third year. *Don Giovanni* opened in Tokyo in 2000 and toured through seven other major Japanese cities.

In our own city, we have the Canadian Opera Company and companies that do new works. This is good for everyone. The more people who go to the opera, the better it is for all of us. Opera has become so popular in North America. There is so much interest. Once people begin to experience an art form it becomes part of their lives, and they ideally start bringing other people. At the beginning, we were told we would always be a small niche company that would never have a significant audience. Over the past 25 years, our ever-expanding audience and subscription base have proven otherwise. I believe you end up with the audience you educate. 🍷

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lorenz@dispeker.com

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lshine@dispeker.com

Galiya Valerio
Artist Manager and Booking Associate
galiya@dispeker.com

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Join us in Boston for



PERA America will hold *Opera Conference 2011* from May 7-11, 2011, in Boston, MA, a culturally rich city with a thriving opera ecology. Professional Company Members **Boston Lyric Opera** and **Opera Boston** will serve as lead hosts, joined by numerous other institutions.

"Boston has a vibrant music community," says Esther Nelson, general and artistic director of Boston Lyric Opera. "Besides all the professional companies, we have college opera programs with very high production values." Following on the success of their recent production of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, the company will unveil a new production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the conference. "*Turn of the Screw* showed us that our audience has a great appetite for Britten. I think *Midsummer Night's Dream* will demonstrate our strength in casting, our philosophy of putting together a strong, evenly matched ensemble." The cast will include Susanna Phillips, John Gaston, Nadine Sierra, Andrew Shore, Darren Stokes, Heather Johnson, Chad A. Johnson, Matthew Worth and Ann McMahon Quintero in a production by Tazewell Thompson, John Conklin, Kaye Voyce and Robert Wierzel.

Photo credits: Ying Huang in the title role and Peter Tantsits as Xu Xian in Opera Boston's world premiere production of Long's *Madame White Snake*. Photo by Clive Grainger. • Marquita Lister as the title role in Boston Lyric Opera's 2009 production of Dvorak's *Rusalka*. Photo by Jeffrey Dunn © 2009. • DongWon Kim with other members of the cast and chorus in the New England Conservatory's 2010 production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Photo by Andrew Brilliant. • Martin Bakari, John Paul Huckle, Chelsea Basler and Jonathan Cole in Boston University Opera Institute's production of Picker's *Thérèse Raquin*. Photo by Frank Curran for Boston University. • Boston Conservatory's 2009 production of Puccini's *La Rondine*. Photo by Michael Fein.



Opera Conference 2011

Carole Charnow, general director of Opera Boston, also looks forward to welcoming OPERA America members to Boston. "I think there has been an explosion of interest in opera and a willingness on the part of the audience to try new things. There have been some very serious and thoughtful efforts to genuinely lead the audience forward." The company will feature Barbara Quintiliani in the title role of *Maria Padilla* in a new production by Julia Pezvner and Alexander Lisyansky, who directed and designed the company's 2009 production of *The Nose*.

OPERA America is meeting with a large group of Boston arts organizations to plan a conference that includes not only professional development activities but also a wide array of performances. Participating companies include Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Boston, American Repertory Theater, ArtsBoston, Boston Opera Collaborative, Boston Metro Opera, Boston Midsummer Opera, Boston Singers' Resource, Boston University, Boston Early Music Festival, Boston Baroque, Cape Cod Opera, Commonwealth Opera, Emerson College, Guerilla Opera, Harvard University, Intermezzo Opera, Longwood Opera, Longy School of Music, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MetroWest Opera, New England Conservatory, North of Boston Arts Center, North Cambridge Family Opera, Opera del West, Opera Hub and Worcester Operaworks. Mark your calendars now for *Opera Conference 2011*, and stay tuned for details! 📅

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BY ALEXA B. ANTOPOL

The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan

David Eden, Meinhard Saremba, Ed.s
Cambridge University Press
ISBN13: 9780521716598

With their memorable melodies and fanciful worlds, the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan remain as popular today as when they were first performed. This *Companion* provides a guide to the history and development of the collaboration between the two men, including an examination of the many myths and half-truths surrounding their relationship. Written by an international team of specialists, the volume features a personal account from film director Mike Leigh on his connection with the Savoy Operas and the creation of his film *Topsy-Turvy*. Starting with the early history of the operatic stage in Britain, the *Companion* places the operas in their theatrical and musical context, investigating the amateur performing tradition, providing new perspectives on the famous patter songs and analyzing their dramatic and operatic potential. Geared toward enthusiasts, performers and students of Gilbert and Sullivan's work, the book examines their legacy and looks toward the future.

The Cambridge Handel Encyclopedia

Annette Landgraf, David Vickers
Cambridge University Press
ISBN13: 9780521881920

George Frideric Handel was born and educated in Germany, flourished in Italy and chose to become British. One

of the most cosmopolitan of the great composers, much of Handel's music has remained in the popular repertory since his lifetime, and a broad variety of his music-theater works from Italian operas to English oratorios have experienced a dramatic renaissance since the late 20th century. This volume gathers the full range of present knowledge and leading new scholarship into a single volume for convenient and illuminating reference. Packed with 700 informative and accessible entries both long and short, this book is ideal for performers, scholars, students and music lovers who wish to explore the Handelian world.

Amelia

Gardner McFall
University of Washington Press
ISBN13: 9780295989396

In the new opera *Amelia*, a first time mother-to-be, whose psyche has been scarred by the loss of her pilot father in Vietnam, must break free from anxiety to embrace healing and renewal for the sake of her husband and child. Set against a 30-year period from the 1960s to the 1990s, the story interweaves one woman's emotional journey, the American experience in Vietnam, and elements of myth and history to explore our fascination with flight and the dilemmas that arise when vehicles of flight are used for exploration, adventure and war. The libretto is by American poet Gardner McFall, whose father was a Navy pilot who served in Vietnam and was lost in the Pacific. It moves from loss to recuperation, paralysis to flight, as the protagonist,

Amelia, ultimately embraces her life and the creative force of love and family. McFall is the author of two volumes of poetry, *The Pilot's Daughter* and *Russian Tortoise*, as well as two children's books. She lives in New York and teaches at Hunter College.

Serving Genius: Carlo Maria Giulini

Thomas D. Saler
University of Illinois Press
ISBN13: 9780252035029

Serving Genius tells the life story of conductor Carlo Maria Giulini. Detailing Giulini's professional career, Thomas D. Saler also chronicles Giulini's personal life, including his musical awakening while growing up, his years as a student in Rome's Academy of St. Cecilia, his WWII experiences and his devotion to his wife, Marcella. Saler provides a detailed analysis of Giulini's musicianship and the way he conveyed that musicianship to the orchestra through physical gestures, and discusses each of the conductor's major musical appointments, including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Vienna Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic. Drawing on extensive interviews with Giulini's family, music critics, arts administrators, orchestra members and collaborating soloists, this volume draws out the personal amid the professional life of this 20th-century conductor. Thomas D. Saler is a conservatory-trained musician and was a longtime member of the Milwaukee Symphony Chorus. 🎻

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