

# 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

## THE FIELD

# WE THE OPERA

**O**ver the past 25 years, the American opera community has cultivated a repertoire that reflects the diversity of our nation's history and literature. Composers and librettists have embraced classic tales and modern fables to form narratives of American life. Similarly, our opera companies have established reciprocal connections with a diverse array of institutions and individuals who comprise the colorful fabric of our nation.

There have always been pragmatic reasons for engaging our communities: raising funds, building awareness, selling tickets and filling gaps in arts education. But the definition of engagement has evolved beyond what is best for our companies to that which co-creates equity in civic life. Dialogues with underserved communities have enhanced the vocabulary of cultural conversation. Immersive experiences have altered the syntax of our art form. "Us" and "them" have become a mutually beneficial "we."

That "we" could be seen at **SEATTLE OPERA**, where an initiative called Belonging(s) collected stories inspired by the region's history. The result was *An American Dream* by Jack Perla and Jessica Murphy Moo, an opera exploring the World War II experience of two Puget Sound women — a Japanese-American facing internment and a Jewish immigrant from Germany — who struggle to find a sense of place in the Pacific Northwest. Interviews, exhibits and documentaries extended the project beyond the walls of the opera house.

The "we" was explored at **VANCOUVER OPERA**, which premiered *Stickboy*, an opera by Neil Weisensel and Shane Koyczan that addressed the cruelty of bullying. Performed as part of the company's subscription season, *Stickboy* also toured British Columbia and was adapted for school productions. Vancouver Opera invited visual artists to respond to the opera by creating murals throughout the city. A website enabled the public to post their own stories of bullying.



The "we" was engaged by **WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA** with *Appomattox*, newly expanded by Philip Glass and Christopher Hampton to bridge the historic struggle for voting rights under Abraham Lincoln to the modern struggle for political equality under Martin Luther King, Jr. A performance by Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists featured songs and readings from the Civil War and Civil Rights eras. Panel discussions featured historians of the African-American experience.

The tragic death of Michael Brown Jr. in Ferguson, Missouri, fostered national outcry, but it also engaged the communal "we" as leaders of concerned religious, educational and arts organizations, including **OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS**, formed a musical response with a free "Concert for Peace & Unity" held at the high school from which Brown had recently graduated. Meanwhile, OTSL has expanded its *New Works, Bold Voices* cycle





The city of Los Angeles was the stage for *Hopscotch*, premiered in November by The Industry. Audiences were whisked through the streets by limousine to experience a 90-minute, 36-chapter participatory opera. Music by Veronika Krausas, Marc Lowenstein, Andrew McIntosh, Andrew Norman, Ellen Reid and David Rosenboom. Libretto by Tom Jacobson, Mandy Kahn, Sarah LaBrie, Jane Stephens Rosenthal, Janine Salinas Schoenberg and Erin Young. Directed by Yuval Sharon. Pictured here is Kirsten Ashley Wiest in chapter 17 of the opera.

CASEY KRINGLEN

of new American operas, which tells diverse stories of our time.

The struggle of soldiers returning from war, and the emotional burdens they and their families face, were explored in *The Long Walk* by Jeremy Howard Beck and Stephanie Fleischmann, based on Brian Castner's book. Commissioned by **AMERICAN LYRIC THEATER** and premiered by **OPERA SARATOGA**, performances were enhanced with readings at a local bookstore and a free concert at the New York State Military Museum featuring scenes from operas based on war and homecoming, from Monteverdi's 1639 *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* to Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell's 2012 *Silent Night*. Veterans, current military and their families were invited to a free open rehearsal.

There are many ways to measure the civic impact of opera: its capacity for effecting social change, its ability to reflect the experiences of audiences, its physical presence in diverse

venues. But there is also its *sui generis* contribution to joy. In a park, at a stadium, on the steps of the Capitol (and yes, even in an opera house), opera can play a role in celebrating civic milestones. In the classroom or a senior center, opera can radiate the inspiration of poets or the comedy of human foibles. In the heart of the individual it can uplift the soul.

By linking opera to contemporary life, and linking opera companies to the lives of our communities, we make connections — in form and function — essential to sustaining the art we serve. Only through building public trust can we overcome stereotypes of our art form, illuminate the relationship between cost and relevance, and build sustainable bridges to opera that everyone can cross. ●

—Matthew Sigman



Vancouver Opera's *Stickboy*, by Neil Weisensel and Shane Koyczan, explored how taunts unleash the monster within, turning victims of bullying into bullies themselves. With Sunny Shams (Boy) and Alan Macdonald (Chris) at center. Conducted by Leslie Dala and directed by Rachel Peake. Scenic design by Drew Facey, costume design by Carmen Alatorre, lighting design by Itai Erdal, animation by Giant Ant and projections by Jamie Nesbitt.



TIM MATHESON

If each of us were forced to flee our homes, what objects and memories would we carry with us? The plight of a Japanese-American woman's internment and a German-Jewish woman's escape from Nazi Europe were combined in Seattle Opera's world premiere of *An American Dream* by Jack Perla and Jessica Murphy Moo. With Hae Ji Chang (Setsuko Kobayashi) and D'Ana Lombard (Eva Crowley). Conducted by Judith Yan and directed by Peter Kazaras. Scenic design by Robert Schaub, costume design by Deborah Trout, lighting design by Connie Yun and videos by Robert Bonniol.



ELISE BAKKETUN





SCOTT SUCHMAN



DAVID BACHMAN

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century struggle for voting rights was extended to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century civil rights movement in a revised version of *Appomattox* by Philip Glass and Christopher Hampton, premiered in November by Washington National Opera. With (l-r) Leah Hawkins (Amelia Boynton), Frederick Ballantine (John Lewis), Soloman Howard (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) and Jarrod Lee (SNCC Man). Conducted by Dante Santiago Anzolini and directed by Tazewell Thompson. Scenic design by Donald Eastman, costume design by Merrily Murray-Walsh and lighting design by Robert Wierzel.

Adapted from the play *Song of Death* by Egyptian playwright Tawfiq al-Hakim, *Sumeida's Song* by composer Mohammed Fairouz bridges Western and Arab musical elements to tell a tale of murder and vengeance. The opera was presented in February by Pittsburgh Opera with Laurel Semerdjian as Asakir and Adelaide Boedecker as her sister, Mabrouka. Conducted by Glenn Lewis and directed by Jennifer Williams. Scenic design by Julia Noulín-Mérat, costumes coordinated by Toni West and lighting by Todd Nonn.





KAREN ALMOND DALLAS OPERA

An imaginary bel canto opera is nestled in a contemporary story of the survival of opera, replete with battling sopranos, the Super Bowl and a volcano, in *Great Scott* by Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally, which was premiered in October by The Dallas Opera. With (l-r) Kevin Burdette (Eric Gold/Ghost of Bazzetti), Rodell Rosel (Anthony Candolino), Anthony Roth Costanzo (Roane Heckle), Joyce DiDonato (Arden Scott), Michael Mayes (Wendell Swann), Ailyn Pérez (Tatyana Bakst) and Frederica von Stade (Mrs. Edward "Winnie" Flato). Conducted by Patrick Summers and directed by Jack O'Brien. Scenic and costume design by Bob Crowley and projections by Elaine J. McCarthy.



GARY DAVID GOLD

A soldier returns from Iraq and struggles to reintegrate into his family life in *The Long Walk* by Jeremy Howard Beck and Stephanie Fleischmann, commissioned by America Lyric Theater and premiered by Opera Saratoga in July. With (l-r) Daniel Belcher (Brian), Eric Schuett (Martin), Robert Wesley Hill (Virgil) and Henry Wager (Sam). Conducted by Steven Osgood and directed by David Schweizer. Scenic design by Mimi Lien, costume design by Nancy Leary and lighting design by Jeff Bruckerhoff.



A mother conspires to brainwash her son into a political assassin in *The Manchurian Candidate* by Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell, based on the classic thriller by Richard Condon. Premiered in March by Minnesota Opera with Brenda Harris (Eleanor Iselin) and Matthew Worth (Sergeant Raymond Shaw). Conducted by Michael Christie and directed by Kevin Newbury. Scenic design by Robert Brill, costume design by Jessica Jahn, lighting design by Japhy Weideman, and projections and video by Sean Nieuwenhuis.



MICHAEL DANIEL

A tale of love, loss and homecoming set against the backdrop of the Civil War was captured in The Santa Fe Opera's world premiere of *Cold Mountain* by Jennifer Higdon and Gene Scheer, based on the novel by Charles Frazier. With Nathan Gunn (Inman) and Isabel Leonard (Ada). Conducted by Miguel Harth-Bedoya and directed by Leonard Foglia. Scenic design by Robert Brill, costume design by David C. Woolard and lighting design by Brian Nason.



KEN HOWARD





Florentine Opera Company's *Elmer Gantry* by Robert Aldridge and Herschel Garfein, with Craig Verm (in the title role) at center. Conducted by Christopher Larkin and directed by Frank Kelley. Scenic design by Kris Stone, costume design by Camille Assaf and lighting design by Noele Stollmack.



BRITTANY MAZURCO

Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Consul*, a nightmarish tale of escape from an imaginary totalitarian regime, was presented in May by Florida Grand Opera. With Kara Shay Thomson (Magda Sorel). Conducted by Andrew Bisantz and directed by Julie Maykowski. Scenic design by David P. Gordon, lighting design by Kevin G. Mynatt and costume design by Howard Tsvi Kaplan. Production: Seattle Opera.





A standing ovation preceded San Diego Opera's *La bohème* in January, a testament to the community's success in sustaining the company through recent financial challenges. The production, which opened SDO's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, was directed by Isabella Bywater (who also designed the set and costumes) and conducted by Karen Keltner in her final opera as resident conductor of the company for 33 years. With Sara Gartland (Musetta) at center. Lighting design by Thomas C. Hase. Production by English National Opera and Cincinnati Opera.

Sarasota Opera exemplified a wide-ranging repertoire for its 2014–2015 season, including the traditional (*Pagliacci*, *Tosca*, *Don Carlos*), the less familiar (Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Golden Cockerel*) and the contemporary (Dean Burry's setting of *The Hobbit*, presented on the main stage by Sarasota Youth Opera). Above: *The Golden Cockerel*, with Riley Svatos at center. Conducted by Ekhart Wycik and directed by Tom Diamond. Scenic design by David G. Gordon, costume design by Howard Tsvi Kaplan and lighting design by Ken Yunker.



# 2015 YEAR IN REVIEW

## OPERA AMERICA

# SERVING OPERA SERVING COMMUNITIES

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Baritone Sherrill Milnes discussed his career as part of the *Conversations* series at the National Opera Center (photo: Audrey N. Saccone). Joyce DiDonato with Susan Morris at a patron dinner following a *Conversations* event (photo: Jessica Osber). The New Works Forum brought together opera creators, producers and artists, such as (l-r) conductors Samuel McCoy and Timothy Myers and composer David T. Little (photo: Jessica Osber). Opera professionals from across the country convened for the annual Marketing/PR Forum at the National Opera Center (photo: Audrey N. Saccone). The Opening Session of *Opera Conference 2015* included speakers (front row, l-r) Francesca Zambello, artistic director of Washington National Opera; Frayda B. Lindemann, OPERA America's board chairman; Rhonda Sweeney, president of Opera Volunteers International; and Roberto Bedoya, director of civic engagement at Arizona's Tucson Pima Arts Council (photo: Jati Lindsay).

In 2015, OPERA America further advanced its long-term strategy of fostering national and local dialogues that affirm the role of opera and opera companies as essential community assets. As companies increasingly identified opportunities for civic engagement and mutually beneficial alliances with other community institutions, OPERA America enhanced its programs and services to ensure that, whether new to our country, our community or our art form, all are welcome — and welcomed — to opera.

### Engagement and Advocacy

The touchstone for these discussions and initiatives was *Opera Conference 2015: Increasing Civic Impact*, hosted May 6 to 9 by **WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA**. More than 550 individuals representing 200 organizations explored what it means — strategically, artistically, financially — for opera companies to engage communities through both direct collaborations and the art they present on their stages. The conference's keynote speaker, Roberto Bedoya, director of civic engagement at the Tucson Pima Arts Council, sparked conversations about how the art form can engender a sense of belonging and build relevant, sincere relationships within communities. After three days of open sessions, seminars and network roundtables delving further into these and other topics, attendees had the privilege of hearing Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, describe her long-abiding love of opera.

Washington, D.C. provided an ideal stage for conference attendees to make the case for opera on Capitol Hill. On May 6, OPERA America hosted the first-ever Opera Advocacy Day, when more than 70 individuals — including general and artistic directors, trustees, administrative staff, and artists — visited more than 40 congressional offices to talk about policies that impact the field.

Advocating for opera continued this fall with National Opera Week, held from October 23 to November 1. This industry focal point allowed opera lovers and professionals across North America to spread the word about the art form's vitality, variety and positive impact on communities. With actor and opera lover David Hyde Pierce as its honorary chairman, this year's National Opera Week was the biggest and farthest-reaching to date, spanning 41 states and provinces with more than 190 events hosted by 200 organizations and individuals. In conjunction with National Opera Week, OPERA America coordinated a second Opera Advocacy Day, during which individuals from more than 20 states sent over 200 letters to congressional







## THE OPERA FUND

Since its inception more than two decades ago, *The Opera Fund*, an endowment that supports new works and related audience programming, has distributed nearly \$13 million in grants. In 2015, the fund awarded grants totaling \$150,000 to 11 companies in support of audience engagement activities linked to productions of contemporary operas. Repertoire Development grants totaling \$225,000 helped fund the creation of nine new works.

### AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

#### CINCINNATI OPERA

*Morning Star*  
Music by Ricky Ian Gordon  
Libretto by William M. Hoffman

A series of programs was designed to cultivate audiences for this world premiere, including local singers who performed Gordon's works, a documentary film and a forum in which the composer and librettist spoke about creating the opera.

#### FORT WORTH OPERA

*JFK*  
Music by David T. Little  
Libretto by Royce Vavrek

An eight-month community engagement series will explore social progress from JFK's inauguration in 1961 through the present day. FWO will partner with organizations throughout North Texas to produce events that highlight topics surrounding the opera.

#### GOTHAM CHAMBER OPERA

*Charlie Parker's Yardbird*  
Music by Daniel Schnyder  
Libretto by Bridgette A. Wimberly

A series of events will provide access to the life and work of Charlie Parker, including a symposium at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a lecture at the Greenwich Village Historic Society and a tour of sites associated with Parker.

#### LONG BEACH OPERA

*Hydrogen Jukebox*  
Music by Philip Glass  
Libretto by Allen Ginsberg

Collaborative events were held in conjunction with *Hydrogen Jukebox*, including a retrospective of American counter-culture, a cultural tour of downtown Los Angeles, a matinee screening of *Easy Rider* and a meal with Philip Glass at a 1960s Los Angeles diner.

#### MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

*Frida*  
Music by Robert Xavier Rodriguez  
Libretto by Hilary Blecher and Migdalia Cruz

Events were held in 12 communities as part of a pilot project to establish a permanent network of community-based clubs, with the goal of creating an informal, social and personal way to interest people in opera.

#### MINNESOTA OPERA

*The Shining*  
Music by Paul Moravec  
Libretto by Mark Campbell

As a part of its New Works Initiative, the company hopes to demystify the creative process by hosting musicians of the St. Cloud Symphony at educational events and workshops associated with the premiere of this new opera.

#### OPERA SARATOGA

*The Long Walk*  
Music by Jeremy Howard Beck  
Libretto by Stephanie Fleischmann

In collaboration with the New York State Military Museum and other community partners, Opera Saratoga explored veteran reintegration, post-traumatic stress disorder, blast-induced traumatic brain injury and the challenges faced by families of those who have served in the military.

#### OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS

*Shalimar the Clown*  
Music by Jack Perla  
Libretto by Rajiv Joseph

OTSL will host a series of engagements featuring the composer and librettist, as well as author Salman Rushdie and tenor Sean Panikkar. Events will focus on adapting Rushdie's novel into an opera, shifting global politics and common themes of humanity across ethnicities and religions.

#### SEATTLE OPERA

*An American Dream*  
Music by Jack Perla  
Libretto by Jessica Murphy Moo

Attendees engaged in participatory activities, including tableaux vivants, theatrical vignettes and conversations with the creative team and community members before and after each performance.

#### SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

*The Snow Dragon*  
Music and libretto by Somtow Sucharitkul

A series of activities engaged new audiences, connected young adults with opera and deepened audiences' understanding of the art form through behind-the-scenes tours, artist talks and community discussions.

#### TULSA OPERA

*Shining Brow*  
Music by Daron Aric Hagen  
Libretto by Paul Muldoon

The story behind *Shining Brow* was explored through a series of programs about the opera's protagonist, Frank Lloyd Wright, including discussions between the composer and art enthusiasts, architecture students and Tulsa Young Professionals.

PHILIP GROSCHONG



*Morning Star*



## REPERTOIRE DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

### AMERICAN LYRIC THEATER

*La Reina*

Music by Jorge Sosa

Libretto by

Laura Sosa Pedroza

Drawing on the Mexico/U.S. drug trade, this electro-acoustic opera is inspired by real life players in the increasingly violent war from the past and present.

### BETH MORRISON PROJECTS

*Ellen West*

Music by Ricky Ian Gordon

Libretto by Frank Bidart

Based on the Frank Bidart poem of the same name, *Ellen West* tells the story of a bulimic girl and the attempts of people trying to save her from herself.

### CINCINNATI OPERA

*Fellow Travelers*

Music by Gregory Spears

Libretto by Greg Pierce

A journey through the world of the 1950s witch hunts reveals an intimate, personal story set against the political backdrop of the "Lavender Scare."

### THE DALLAS OPERA

*Opera title to be announced*

### HERE

*Winter's Child*

Music by Ellen Reid

Libretto by Roxie Perkins

Co-produced by Beth Morrison Projects

Set in a Southern gothic landscape, the opera reveals a world of rough earth, quiet prayer and a mother's fight to change her daughter's fate.

### NASHVILLE OPERA

*Three Way*

Music by Robert Paterson

Libretto by David Cote

Co-produced by

American Opera Projects

This NC-17 triptych resembles *Il tritico*, with three comic portraits forming a snapshot of our erotic times.

### OPERA MEMPHIS

*By/In Memphis*

(working title)

Music by

Kamala Sankaram,

Sam Shoup, Robert

Paterson, Marco Pavé and

one additional composer

Libretto by Jerry Dye and

Marco Pavé

A collection of five operas, each inspired by different Memphis neighborhoods or landmarks, will be performed with different community partners.

### OPERA PARALLÈLE

*Today It Rains*

Music by Laura Kaminsky

Libretto by Mark Campbell

and Kimberly Reed

Co-produced by American

Opera Projects and Cornish

College of the Arts

Set on a train in 1929, the opera shares the journey of Georgia O'Keefe as she travels to Santa Fe in search of a more fulfilling life as an artist.

### OPERA THEATRE OF SAINT LOUIS

*The Grapes of Wrath*

Music by Ricky Ian Gordon

Libretto by Michael Korie

The 2007 opera, based on the Steinbeck novel, will be presented in a newly revised edition.



JAMES TY CUMBIIE

Soprano Chelsea Basler, a Boston Lyric Opera Emerging Artist, performed as part of OPERA America's *Emerging Artist Recital Series*.

representatives urging them to support policies that promote the art form.

Advocating for opera was not limited to Opera Advocacy Day. Throughout the past year, OPERA America continually represented the opera field in front of federal agencies, Congress and the White House, participating in more than 100 meetings. By the end of 2015, performing arts advocates had achieved several major victories: Congress passed the Protecting Americans from Tax Hike Act, which reinstated and made permanent a number of expired charitable tax extenders, including the IRA charitable rollover; President Obama signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act, which includes many provisions supporting access to quality arts education; and Congress proposed \$2 million funding increases for both the NEA and the Department of Education's Arts in Education Program.

## Resources for Education

**T**his fall, OPERA America brought teenagers into the national conversation about opera through a new initiative called Opera Teens, which is designed to empower high schoolers to pursue their interests in opera, share opera learning with others and leverage the power of opera to serve local communities. Guided by OPERA America's Learning and Engagement department, high school students across the country formed Opera Teens Councils to host events throughout the year, often in partnership with local opera companies. A dedicated Opera Teens blog, with content created and edited by teens, provides a forum for these young opera lovers to share their thoughts on the art form.

OPERA America furthered this effort to engage young people in opera by launching NOTES (National Opera Teacher and Educator Source), an online platform that brings together hundreds of lesson plans and study guides that incorporate opera into K–12 classrooms. NOTES, supported by the Hearst Foundations, allows opera educators across North America to access exemplary teaching materials created by OPERA America's own Professional Company Members.

Students at the university level were reached through a new series held at the National Opera Center, *Masters at Work: Crafting an Opera with Carlisle Floyd*, in which celebrated composer Carlisle Floyd spoke to composition students about the process of writing his newest work, *Prince of Players*. Over the course of multiple discussions, each focusing on a different aspect of the opera-making process, music students from Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, Wichita State University,



San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Houston's Moores School of Music and Florida State University were able to observe an interview with Floyd, moderated by OPERA America President/CEO Marc A. Scorca, and ask Floyd questions via live stream.

## Presenting and Convening

**O**PERA America developed additional opportunities for exploring the world of opera through *Onstage at the Opera Center*, its annual series featuring concerts and discussions with industry luminaries. This year's events included renowned baritone Sherrill Milnes, composers David T. Little and Jennifer Higdon, and emerging singers from Washington National Opera and Opera Columbus. In its continuing effort to bolster public engagement through technology, OPERA America offered free live streams of all *Onstage at the Opera Center* events, reaching a robust international audience.

A core tenet of OPERA America's service to the field has been its convening function — bringing together members to forge strategies for moving the art form forward. Throughout the past year, OPERA America hosted a number of Forums for professionals working in several different branches of the field, including marketing and PR, singer training, education and community engagement, and technical/production. At these meetings, colleagues had the chance to share best practices, explore common issues and, in many cases, discuss how their companies are leveraging artistic assets to increase their civic impact.

The annual New Works Forum, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, brought together composers, librettists, producers and publishers to examine the landscape of contemporary American opera through libretto readings, showcases of works in development and staged performances of brand-new operas.



Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg delivered keynote remarks at *Opera Conference 2015* and was made an honorary life member of OPERA America.

## Leadership

**O**PERA America enhanced professional development this year by expanding its Leadership Intensive, a program sponsored by American Express that provides career support for emerging leaders in opera administration. New for 2015, OPERA America instituted a Next Steps program, which brought together Leadership Intensive alumni for specialized training at both *Opera Conference 2015* and the National Opera Center.

Fortifying board leadership at OPERA America's member

## OPERA GRANTS FOR FEMALE COMPOSERS

**T**hanks to the continued support of The Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation, OPERA America renewed its Opera Grants for Female Composers program, which supports individual composers and opera companies producing work by women. Last spring, OPERA America awarded Discovery Grants totaling \$100,000 to seven female composers in support of works in progress. The next round of grants, to be awarded this spring, will go to opera companies to help fund commissions.

### KITTY BRAZELTON

*The Art of Memory* reimagines Augustine and Ambrose, early Christians in fourth-century Milan. The struggles of these two men (sung by women) mirror issues of the present day, from Ambrose's nonviolent resistance to intolerance to Augustine's yearning for spiritual absolution.

### LAURA KARPMAN

The multimedia opera *Balls* dramatizes the famed September 20, 1973, tennis game between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs. Dubbed "The Battle of the Sexes," the match changed the perception and treatment of women in sports and significantly advanced the women's rights movement.

### PATRICIA LEONARD

Based on the voluminous correspondence of John and Abigail Adams between 1762 and 1801, *My Dearest Friend* examines their accounts of political tensions between America and Great Britain, underscored by Abigail's personal sacrifices to support her husband's political career.

### JING JING LUO

Based on a narrative poem of the Yi minority in China, *Ashima* describes a female soul with rare beauty and a loving heart. In a multisensory experience, the three main

characters are all sung by one countertenor, with the accompanying musicians also playing roles onstage.

### ODALINE DE LA MARTINEZ

*Imoinda*, loosely based on a 17<sup>th</sup>-century novella by Aphra Behn, examines slavery through the eyes of lovers Olo and Imoinda. Set in Africa, the story unfolds over a 24-hour period, beginning with a palace ball and ending with the lovers being sent to America as slaves.

### KAMALA SANKARAM

*The Privacy Show*, a "techno-noir" opera, confronts the issue of privacy in an increasingly digitized society. Its music, based on real-time data mined from the audience, questions society's willingness to relinquish individual privacy in the name of security.

### SU LIAN TAN

*Lotus Lives*, a chamber opera for singers and brass ensemble, explores themes of growth, discovery and crossing cultures through a shifting panorama of singers, dancers, instrumentalists and shadow puppets. The opera blends rap, Chinese folk songs and dance-club music.





JEFF REIDER

A ceremony was held in New York for honorees of the 2015 National Opera Trustee Recognition Program. Pictured here (l-r): Frayda B. Lindemann, OPERA America chairman; Carol F. Henry, OPERA America board member; Sue Bienkowski, Long Beach Opera; James H. McCoy, Hawaii Opera Theatre; Frank Kuehn, Opera Southwest; John Nesholm, Seattle Opera. Not pictured: Michael Morris, Pacific Opera Victoria.

companies remained a priority this year, as well. To foster strong, knowledgeable trustees at its member companies, OPERA America offered on-site consultations, provided benchmarking reports to help trustees gauge the health of their companies and hosted a National Trustee Forum at which trustees shared governance strategies. Exemplary board leadership was celebrated through the annual National Opera Trustee Recognition Program, sponsored by Bank of America, which honored five outstanding leaders who serve on boards of Professional Company Members.

## Space to Create

Over the past year, the heart of OPERA America's activities has been the National Opera Center, now entering its third year of operations. In 2015, the Opera Center served a larger constituency than ever before, with more than 75,000 visitors filling its recitals halls and studios for performances, rehearsals, recordings, meetings and myriad other activities. In February, the Opera Center's recital hall was named after President/CEO Marc A. Scorca in honor of his 25 years at the helm of OPERA America. The dedication of Marc A. Scorca Hall was made possible by a \$2 million honorary campaign led by board members, colleagues and friends.

Building upon the achievements of the past year, OPERA America looks ahead to 2016 with renewed dedication to increasing the civic impact of opera — by showcasing the vibrancy and diversity of opera across North America, by advocating for the art form on a national and international level, and by providing crucial channels of communication among opera professionals, as well as between opera companies and the communities they serve. ●

—Nicholas Wise

## BUILDING OPERA AUDIENCES GRANTS

Since its inception in 2013, the Building Opera Audiences grant program, generously funded by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, has awarded \$900,000 in support of 29 marketing programs designed to increase attendance at mainstage productions and encourage audience retention. In 2015, the program awarded funding for the following initiatives:

### BUILDING AUDIENCE LOYALTY

To retain a recent influx of new audience members, Lyric Opera of Chicago will implement strategic audience development research to determine which factors drive loyalty within new populations of audiences and then develop appealing loyalty programs.

### CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Utah Symphony | Utah Opera will collaborate with local artists to host events targeting leaders in Utah's creative class who may not be aware of the alignments between opera and other art forms. Attendance will be analyzed to determine which segments of the creative community are most likely to attend opera and which collaborations were most effective in increasing opera attendance.

### 30 DAYS OF OPERA

Opera Memphis will increase the scope of its 30 Days of Opera program, a month-long series of free performances that was previously funded by a 2013 Building Opera Audiences grant. The company will imbed a documentary filmmaker with the 30 Days performers and offer the resulting footage on a new website.

### GENERATION NEXT

Opera Lancaster will engage local school children and young adults in personal opera experiences, offering *Opera Tales: The Three Little Pigs* for elementary-aged children and highlights from *Carmen* for high schoolers. A "Come to the Show" program marketed to families will offer free tickets to select events.

### INDIE OPERA T.O. — UP-RISING

In a consortium organized by Tapestry Opera, 12 independent opera companies in Toronto will forge collaboration and cross-promotion. Participating companies will promote their activities to a wider audience base, primarily via the web and social media.

### OPERA A LA CART

Inspired by Portland's celebrated food cart culture, Portland Opera will create a traveling performance cart inspired by the food truck aesthetic. Attendees will be provided with a "takeout menu" highlighting upcoming activities, discounts on tickets, a rehearsal invitation, introductory materials and a preview CD.

### OPERA IN HIALEAH

Florida Grand Opera will expand its cultural alliance with the City of Hialeah, which has a large proportion of low-income households, to offer free transportation to its mainstage productions of *The Barber of Seville* and *Don Pasquale*.

### RE-BRANDING OPERA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Los Angeles Opera will continue its campaign to place opera and opera-related stories in television and films, originally funded by a 2014 Building Opera Audiences grant, and develop strategies for the long-term sustainability of the project.

### SARATOGA SINGS!

Opera Saratoga will offer free monthly performance events leading up to its summer festival in order to build awareness of the company and increase mainstage attendance. A customized loyalty app will allow the company to collect market research and motivate new paid attendance.