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# BRAVO

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## BACK TO THE FUTURE

AS THE WORLD OPENS BACK UP AND LIFE RESUMES, TEN FRIENDS OF THE OPERA LEAGUE REFLECT ON OPERA'S EVOLUTION.

By TOM LADY

### WHAT'S INSIDE

James Darrah named  
LBO Artistic Director

Volunteer Spotlight:  
Ron Streicher

My First Opera:  
Dr. Debra Myers



As I write this, Los Angeles County has just graduated to the yellow tier, the least restrictive of the four tiers in California's framework for reopening our economy. A month from now, the state will discard the framework and throw open the doors to normal life.

While it has only been a year and change since the pandemic began, it can feel like an age has passed since we last took in an opera performance in person. So much has happened on so many fronts. So much has changed. It is safe to say the world will never be the same. That includes opera.

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*Considering the lack of interest European politicians have shown towards the arts in recent years, it seems logical that opera subsidies will be cut drastically*

*resulting in less opera performances, less grand opera productions and even less opera houses. Many opera house artists will lose their permanent engagements. The only chance to avoid this scenario would be an outcry of arts support by the voters. The audience needs to stand up for opera. After all, one must remember that German concert halls and opera houses usually sell more tickets to performances than the national soccer league does to its matches. Hope dies last.*

**- STEPHAN BURIANEK, VIENNA, AUSTRIA-BASED FOUNDER OF OPERN.NEWS—A NEW GERMAN NON-PROFIT ONLINE MAGAZINE**



*I have a hopeful vision about what we will be seeing on our stages after this pandemic period. We have seen that digital formats are here to stay, but we will be*

*experiencing hybrid models, staged and virtual formats, without canceling each other.*

*We have learned in this period that now, more than ever, we need art to be resilient and adapt to the times. We have been transforming during the pandemic, and we needed art for weeping and laughing. Art has been our best friend, and no doubt opera is a perfect vehicle: word, painting and images working together to pour all our emotions into an art form. If we have learned our lesson correctly, we will experience operas that reflect our times and troubles. Casts will be representing diversity, and works will be in different languages rather than only in Italian, German and French.*

**- ANDREA PUENTE CATÁN, DIRECTOR OF MAJOR GIFTS AND HISPANIC AFFAIRS, SAN DIEGO OPERA; EDITOR OF MUSICAL CATALOGUE DANIEL CATÁN, 1972-2011**



*My vision for opera post pandemic would be finding a way to connect in this newfound virtual space more meaningfully, with artists collaborating*

*to create works on a smaller scale but with great impact. Having artists at all stages of their development and careers using this innovation to continue connecting with audiences, independent of opera companies and/or with the support of opera companies, even if not from the opera house. Continuing even more forcefully a drive to diversify the institutions at all levels. Finally, opera companies being brave enough to present productions that are scaled down in size but not in impact. If the right balance is struck, it can be sustainable.*

**- RUSSELL THOMAS, TENOR, LA OPERA ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**



*In a post-pandemic world, opera should evolve with a sense of acute consciousness and awareness on how we have been impacted as a society. It will need to find*

*a delicate balance between mirroring on stage and in logistical matters the hardships that we have been through on a community and global level, while also providing a carefree escape and enjoyment for the audience that allows them to experience the joys of an in-person performance reminiscent of a pre-pandemic time.*

**- MILA LÓPEZ, EDUCATOR, GRIFFITH STEAM MAGNET MIDDLE SCHOOL**



*As I look ahead to a post-pandemic world, I can't help but to look behind at what we have learned from this time and at what has been created. The opera industry has*

*been forced to innovate in ways that couldn't have been predicted. Access to the art form has been opened up in unprecedented ways through online platforms and free and low-cost entry price points.*

*The racial reckoning that gripped the country has pushed the industry to deal with a (partial) endemic racist and white supremacist repertoire and, in some cases, culture, and there are significant strides being made to address this. My fervent hope is for lasting systemic change. I also hope that our return to in-person [performances] doesn't distract us from the strides we have made as an industry but rather helps to continue the forward momentum.*

**- BETH MORRISON, BETH MORRISON PROJECTS**



*After fourteen months without live performances (except in highly constrained conditions), the first thing many of us want is simply to be in a room with our*

*fellow human beings, sharing that unique experience of simultaneous togetherness and otherness that only live music can provide.*

*Operatic singing emerges organically from the human body, and in so doing it reminds us that we have bodies. This is crucial in a society that, like ours, is perilously close to de-incarnation. We spend much of our time in a huge imaginary room called the Internet, and the Internet is a chilly, bodiless space, one where it is scarily easy for us to be cruel to one another.*

*So I think opera's first task, post pandemic, is also its most basic one: to bring us close together again, to cause our chest cavities to vibrate in sympathy with an astonishing voice, to remind us that the human body is capable of more than we could have imagined.*

*Longer term, opera needs to continue the vital work of expanding its tent, of inviting new voices to contribute to its huge cosmic mosaic—not just singing "voices," but composers, directors, conductors and impresarios from the widest possible range of backgrounds. If it does so, I think we'll find out that opera, at four hundred-odd years old, is barely an infant. It's just getting started.*

**- MATTHEW AUCOIN, COMPOSER, CONDUCTOR, WRITER, PIANIST, 2018 MACARTHUR FELLOW; AUTHOR OF THE IMPOSSIBLE ART: ADVENTURES IN OPERA, TO BE PUBLISHED DECEMBER 8, 2021 BY FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX** 🌟