

DONA D. VAUGHN JOHN CHURCHWELL DIRECTOR DIANE PAULUS

OPERA NEWS

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OPERA

IN AMERICA:

What's Next

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Finding an Audience for the Future:
**Peter Gelb, David Gockley,
Anthony Freud, Speight Jenkins**

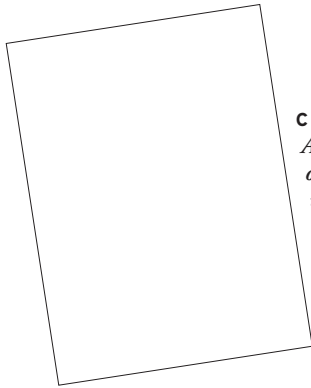
Is Opera Still Relevant?

Matthew Epstein: Life after Chicago

The Twenty-Five Most Powerful Names in U.S. Opera

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*Graphic: Gregory Downer
Binocular photo: Dario Acosta*

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Diane Paulus, the visionary director whose productions have helped define a new artistic profile for Chicago Opera Theater

The Twenty-Five Most

Powerful Names in U.S. Opera

With several of U.S. opera's top jobs changing hands this season, who are the industry's key players?

by F. Paul Driscoll and Brian Kellow

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The Executives

PLÁCIDO DOMINGO

General Director, Los Angeles Opera
General Director, Washington National Opera

Color him evergreen. At an age when most of his contemporaries are thinking of retirement, Domingo seems to thrive on the challenges of running two large-scale American opera companies on opposite sides of the continent — while still keeping a full calendar of engagements as singer and conductor, as well as supervising the burgeoning activities of Operalia, the international opera competition he founded in 1993. Still one of the most potent box-office attractions the art form has ever had, Domingo is also one of opera's most energetic and effective fundraisers.



ANTHONY FREUD

General Director, Houston Grand Opera

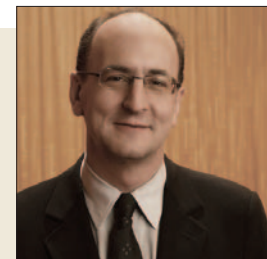
After more than a decade as general director of Welsh National Opera, the jovial, astute Freud took over the reins in Houston in March of this year, becoming HGO's third general director and first CEO. As Freud prepares for his first full season at the head of the opera company that has been called America's most innovative, he talks to *The Dallas Morning News's* Scott Cantrell, beginning on page 27.



RICHARD GADDES

General Director, Santa Fe Opera

Gadde crowned his long association with Santa Fe Opera, the biggest of North America's many excellent summer opera festivals, in 2001, when he took over as the company's second general director, succeeding Santa Fe Opera founder John Crosby. Cool and clever, Gadde has maintained Santa Fe's reputation for international-caliber productions while establishing new connections to the local community.



PETER GELB

General Manager, The Metropolitan Opera

Gelb has the biggest job at the biggest opera company in the United States. Need we say more? Beginning on page 21, Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Justin Davidson reflects on some of the challenges facing Gelb, who officially begins his tenure as the Met's general manager this month.

DAVID GOCKLEY

General Director, San Francisco Opera

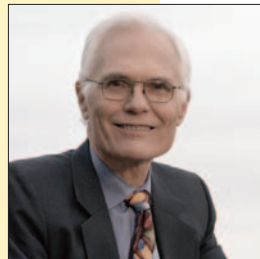
In his thirty-three years as general director of Houston Grand Opera, Gockley presented thirty-three world premieres — including new works on Richard Nixon, Jacqueline Onassis and Dick Tracy — built a new opera house, established one of the best young-artists' programs in the country and transformed a small regional company into an institution of international stature. Now he's moved on to San Francisco Opera, an organization with a long, distinguished tradition that has had a few rocky seasons of late. What does Gockley have in store for the City by the Bay? Beginning on page 23, he shares some of his plans with critic Timothy Mangan.



SPEIGHT JENKINS

General Director, Seattle Opera

Some eyebrows were raised in 1983 when Seattle Opera tapped a New York-based journalist (and former OPERA NEWS editor) for its top job, but Jenkins has taken the measure of his adopted city and its audience brilliantly — as he demonstrates in his conversation with James C. Whitson, beginning on page 25. Jenkins's landmark productions of the operas of Richard Wagner, among them Francesca Zambello's 1998 *Tristan und Isolde* and Stephen Wadsworth's 2001 *Ring* cycle, have made the Pacific Northwest a place of pilgrimage for Wagnerians from all over the world.



WILLIAM MASON

General Director, Lyric Opera of Chicago

A seasoned professional who began his career with Lyric as a child — he sang the *Tosca* Shepherd Boy for the company in the 1950s — Mason has won the respect of his colleagues and his board by making some tough decisions to balance financial solvency with artistic quality — never an easy thing, but an especially tricky proposition in an era when arts presenters everywhere are trying to attract a new generation of operagoers while holding on to their existing audiences.

The Conductors



JAMES CONLON

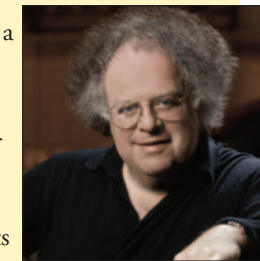
Music Director, Los Angeles Opera

In his upcoming first season as music director of Los Angeles Opera, Conlon will conduct *La Traviata*, *Don Carlo*, *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* and *Tannhäuser* in a city that seems ideally suited to his energetic, highly theatrical brand of music-making — and to the Manhattan-born maestro's canny, no-bluffing-allowed understanding of the media. (Who else would have the smarts to make Zemlinsky good copy?) Assumption of the Los Angeles job completes Conlon's current trio of high-profile U.S. music posts: he is also music director of Ravinia Festival and music director of the Cincinnati May Festival, where he recently celebrated his twenty-seventh anniversary.

JAMES LEVINE

Music Director, The Metropolitan Opera
Music Director, Boston Symphony Orchestra

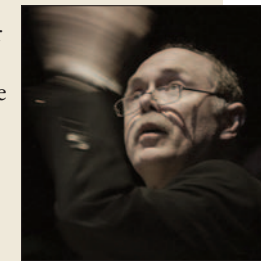
When an injury sidelined James Levine for the second half of the Met season just passed, Manhattan operaphiles went through severe separation anxiety. The Met's music director and his orchestra have embodied the sound of Mozart, Verdi and Wagner in New York for three decades; for more than a generation, Levine's tastes have defined the breadth of the Met's repertory and the depth of its roster. Several of Levine's opera-house specialties are finding their way into the schedule of Boston Symphony Orchestra, where Levine is now in his third year as music director: the calendar at Symphony Hall this season will include blue-chip casts in concert presentations of *Moses und Aron*, *Fidelio* and *Bluebeard's Castle*.



STEPHEN LORD

Music Director, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
Music Director, Boston Lyric Opera

Lord began his career as a coach/accompanist and probably knows voices as well as (or better than) any of his peers. But unlike so many other sharp judges of talent, Lord is also a generous mentor, a man whose casting savvy has helped to achieve stylish, world-class opera performances in Denver, Detroit, Philadelphia, Tucson, Omaha and Portland, Maine, among other cities, for two decades. Lord is now moving on to bigger theaters in bigger cities: his long-overdue New York City Opera debut was a triumphant *La Rondine* in 2004 — an assignment he repeats for Dallas Opera in 2007 — and he joins San Francisco Opera this fall for *Rigoletto*.



PATRICK SUMMERS

Music Director, Houston Grand Opera

Versatile, eager and ambitious, Summers has won a reputation as a conductor that star singers trust: at HGO, he has paced Renée Fleming's first Violetta, Patricia Racette's first *Don Carlo* Elisabetta, Dmitri Hvorostovsky's first Rigoletto and Susan Graham's first Hanna Glawari. Summers's elegant, poised management of his conducting assignments during the Met's recent gala honoring Joseph Volpe — in which the maestro conducted a grab bag of selections ranging from Mozart, Bellini and Verdi to Lehár and Jerome Kern — was a model of grace under televised pressure. Summers also has built up an impressive résumé of world-premiere conducting credits, among them Tod Machover's *Resurrection*, Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree*, Jake Heggie's *The End of the Affair* and Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*, all Houston Grand Opera presentations, as well as Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* at San Francisco Opera.



The Managers

MATTHEW A. EPSTEIN

Director of Vocal Divisions,
Columbia Artists Management, Inc.

He's like The Eyes of Dr. Eckleburg in *The Great Gatsby*: he's everywhere. But we decided to let one of the most influential forces in the opera world speak for himself, as he does in the profile on page 29.



RONALD A. WILFORD

Chairman, CEO,
Columbia Artists Management, Inc.

A high roller in the music industry once jokingly referred to him as “The Darth Vader of artist managers.” Come to think of it, maybe he *wasn't* joking. It's an apt description of the board chairman and chief executive officer of Columbia Artists Management, Inc., still the mightiest classical-music corporation in the world. Wilford has history for a middle name. He virtually invented the concept of the conductor as a super-power — a concept that has turned into an undeniable reality. Today, he presides over a business that boasts some of the world's most prominent maestros — such a select roster that they don't even have a listing of their own in the classical-music world's bible, the *Musical America* directory. In particular, Wilford has made himself an industry-wide power as the chief architect of James Levine's career. A force to be reckoned with — which even the likes of Herbert Breslin and Joseph Volpe would admit.



The Geniuses

JOHN ADAMS

Composer

Although he's not primarily known as an opera composer, at least one of Adams's pieces for the lyric stage — *Nixon in China*, given its premiere by Houston Grand Opera in 1987 — has already achieved the status of a modern classic, and his body of work for the theater is distinguished for its uncompromising courage in tackling contemporary social and moral issues. Adams's penchant for taking on big subjects — whether the explosive cultural tensions in the Middle East (*The Death of Klinghoffer*), the birth of Christ (the oratorio *El Niño*) or the implications of atomic power (*Doctor Atomic*) — makes him a natural for coverage by the “crossover” press. But it is the brilliance of his music that has made Adams a “must-have” for classical-music presenters throughout the U.S. Before the latest Adams opera, *Doctor Atomic*, opened at San Francisco Opera in 2005, Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Met already had committed to presenting the work in future seasons, a hat trick unlikely to be equaled by any other American composer in the near future.



JULIE TAYMOR

Director, Designer

Taymor's 2004 Met debut wasn't the first major opera-house assignment for *The Lion King's* queen — she had already directed *Oedipus Rex* at Japan's Saito Kinen Festival, *Der Fliegende Holländer* in Los Angeles and *Salome* at the Kirov — but her visionary reimagining of *Die Zauberflöte* for the Met established Taymor as a bona fide opera superstar. Who could have predicted that the hottest ticket in New York would be Mozart's beloved singspiel, a repertory staple at the Met for more than a century? This season, Taymor's *Zauberflöte* will return to Met for its second revival and will also introduce — in a ninety-minute English-language *Flute* adaptation developed by Taymor and librettist J. D. McClatchy — what is planned to be an annual series of “Family Holiday Presentations” by the company. Taymor's hit-maker status may be dented a bit by this season's troubled production of *Grendel* at Los Angeles Opera and the Lincoln Center Festival, but it's a cinch that any opera company in the world would move heaven and earth (if it could) to get Taymor on its payroll.



visionary reimagining of *Die Zauberflöte* for the Met established Taymor as a bona fide opera superstar. Who could have

ALEC C. TREUHAFT

Senior Vice President and
Director/Vocal Division, IMG Artists

Formerly a manager at the venerable Columbia Artists Management, Treuhaft decamped in 2000 to join IMG, where he has done impressive work in increasing his company's clout. Treuhaft guides the careers of some of today's most important singers, among them David Daniels, Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Dawn Upshaw, Audra McDonald, Hei-Kyung Hong, Andrea Gruber, Sondra Radvanovsky and Karita Mattila.



PETER SELLARS

Director

Few (if any) U.S. opera directors had established themselves as stars before the advent of Sellars, who first caught the attention of the national press during his senior year at Harvard, with his slick 1981 “Cape Canaveral” staging of Handel's *Orlando* at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge. A full generation of imitators has followed Sellars, all of them fired by his flair in creating “high concept” productions but most of them lacking the conscience, passion and musicality that make Sellars's best work (*Nixon in China* at Houston Grand Opera, *Saint François d'Asise* in Salzburg, *Theodora* at Glyndebourne) so striking. Now in his late forties, Sellars has lost none of his enfant terrible ability to enrage his detractors — who have called his work cold and manipulative — or to excite his admirers, who hail him as a genuine, still-potent creative force.



The Diva



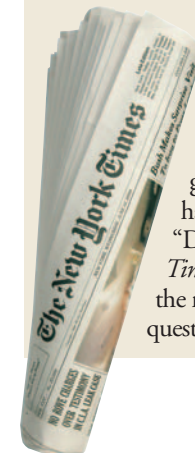
RENÉE FLEMING

Soprano

She's earned critical raves and an enthusiastic following for her performances of an uncommonly wide range of roles — from Charpentier's Louise to Handel's Alcina and Rodelinda (above) to Dvořák's Rusalka. Blessed with a seemingly insatiable artistic appetite, Fleming backs away from few challenges. What has really made her the most important woman in the industry, however, isn't just her singing. With jaw-dropping career savvy, she has managed to break out of traditional “classical” boundaries and become America's most celebrated opera star. How many other divas have ever appeared on the cover of *Town & Country*? People who don't know much about opera know that Fleming is an important star, just as they knew it about Risë Stevens and Eileen Farrell in sunnier days. Given the mass media's allergic reaction to most of the current crop of classical artists, Fleming's celebrity is an impressive achievement indeed.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

At times, ours seems like a dark age for music criticism. *Time* and *Newsweek* have all but abandoned serious coverage on any regular basis; *Saturday Review* and *After Dark* are long defunct, as are many once widely-read music magazines, such as *Musical America* and *Keynote*. Alex Ross of *The New Yorker* is a superb writer, but he gets only a fraction of the space that Andrew Porter once did. Whatever our reservations about certain issues, we should all be grateful that *The New York Times* continues to be a major presence in serious classical-music coverage. The real power here lies not with individuals but with the newspaper itself. Publicists and presenters throughout the U.S. turn themselves inside out to get coverage within its hallowed pages, and “Did you read the *Times* review?” is perhaps the most frequently asked question in the business.



The Media

TIM PAGE

Journalist

It's what the Irish call the voice of sweet reason: Page, the Pulitzer Prize-winning chief classical music critic for *The Washington Post*, writes essays that are always lucid, informed, witty and utterly fair. Formerly a staff critic at both *The New York Times* and *Newsday*, Page has long been one of journalism's standard-setters where criticism is concerned. He's also a kingmaker in his field, having helped launch the careers of Anthony Tommasini, Philip Kennicott and fellow Pulitzer recipient Justin Davidson. And his interests don't stop with opera: he also has written a superb biography of author Dawn Powell.



SIXTY MINUTES

The granddaddy of all news-magazine TV shows, it is the Holy Grail of press coverage so far as musicians are concerned. A *Sixty Minutes* segment is a guaranteed career-booster:



witness Renée Fleming's jump in popularity after her 1999 interview with Morley Safer, and the attention garnered by the episode in which Deborah Voigt frankly discussed her gastric bypass surgery. Unlike many opera presenters, the show doesn't even discriminate against counter-tenors: in 2002, it ran a segment on Bejun Mehta. In a time when classical music is television's dirtiest word, *Sixty Minutes's* track record is all the more admirable.

The Image-Makers

EDGAR VINCENT

Vincent & Farrell Associates, Inc.

In her book, *Cinderella & Company*, Manuela Hoelterhoff wrote that Vincent resembled “Vincent Price’s long-lost brother” — her way, apparently, of characterizing one of the most elegant spin doctors in the industry. Highly respected by artists and presenters alike, Vincent has worked with a dazzling list of artists, from Birgit Nilsson to Cecilia Bartoli, Dolora Zajick to Beverly Sills, who hit the

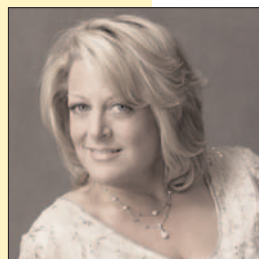


very top with the help of his shrewd guidance. Today he works in both public relations and management. Currently, his star client is opera’s renaissance man, Plácido Domingo, and Vincent keeps a close watch over the tenor’s myriad activities as singer, conductor and impresario. With his perennially smooth telephone greeting, “Hello, caro,” he could teach some of the industry’s army of crass publicists a thing or two.

DEBORAH VOIGT

Soprano

“Bigger is better,” goes a song from the off-Broadway musical hit *When Pigs Fly*. Voigt didn’t agree and, through gastric bypass surgery, shed dozens of unwanted pounds. What ensued was a media blitz seldom seen in the music business, making an already acclaimed dramatic soprano a figure of fascination to the general public. (It’s also a gift that keeps on giving: notice how often *The New York Times* mentions Voigt’s weight loss in its reviews of her performances.) Now, in addition to being the Sieglinde and *Frau* Empress of her generation, the newly svelte Voigt feels confident in taking on such non-fat-lady roles as Salome and carving out a career as a chic cabaret chanteuse.



The Phantom



MARIA CALLAS

Legend

Nearly thirty years after her death, she’s still the definition of the diva as artist — and still one of classical music’s best-selling vocalists. The irony, of course, is that Maria Callas spent her last few years in seclusion, believing that the world of opera had forgotten her. There’s no chance of that — at least not as long as *Norma* still gets produced. As any of the ladies who sing Bellini’s priestess these days can tell you, Callas still steals the notices.

The Doctor

EVANS MIRAGEAS

Artistic Director, Cincinnati Opera

That tired old adjective “peripatetic” would seem to be the only one that applies to Mirageas. He’s covered a lot of the music business’s waterfront, notably as head of Decca’s A&R division during the 1990s, where, among other things, he masterminded Renée Fleming’s discography. Famous for his high standards, he bid farewell to Decca when the company’s classical output began to trickle down the drain. Since then he’s performed, brilliantly, as a Mr. Fix-It for a vast number of performing-arts institutions. He has cast major projects for Semyon Bychkov, music director of the WDR Cologne; Brooklyn Academy of Music; and Los Angeles Opera. In 2005, he became artistic director of Cincinnati Opera, where he hopes to build a whole new roster of stars. No wonder some have dubbed him “Dr. Mirageas”: in these troubled times for the arts, he’s probably going to be on call for the foreseeable future.



The Met, San Francisco Opera and Houston Grand Opera are all beginning new leadership eras.

