

ISSUE 55
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BRAVO

THE MAGAZINE OF THE OPERA LEAGUE OF LOS ANGELES

By JUDITH HYMAN
and BILL GREEN

OUR COMMON NOTE

Have you ever wondered what your fellow Opera Leaguers have been doing during the pandemic?

Your friendly neighborhood BRAVO staff wondered too. So we developed a survey to find out.

We discovered, perhaps not surprisingly, that Opera League members have been creative in finding ways to spend their time.

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WHAT'S INSIDE

John R. Jackson of African Americans for LA Opera

A Portrait of 93-year-young Eleanor T. Gnuv

Catching up with Conlon

Photo by Randy Smith

Sunrise to Sunset Hiking Group of Orange County

From the President

Photo by Kenny Goldberg



The River of Time

Greetings, friends.

Since I last gazed at you from the inside page of the Winter BRAVO (BRAVO 53), a lot has changed. Heck, our very world has changed.

Let's start with the basics. My hair is now longer than in that official photo, and free of coloring chemicals. I call it Liberation Gray.

Of more gravity, we are in the indiscriminate grip of a pandemic that has made us rethink how we work, shop, talk to other people and spend our leisure time. Our beloved LA Opera has been forced to postpone live performances, and as its arm of support, the Opera League has been obliged to postpone or cancel volunteer and social events associated with our resident opera company.

Another disaster, albeit by no means as lengthy or deadly, befell our community just over eighty years ago. If you are a native Angeleno as I am, or just interested in the history of this complicated, illustrious city, you may know about the 1938 storm that caused our namesake river to swell and overflow its banks and forever change the lives of so many, not to speak of the surrounding geography. If you'd like to learn more about that flood in granular detail, yes, there's an app for that.

My mother tells me stories of that deluge, how she missed a day or two of junior high and watched the waters spread in her neighborhood. However, in that time of crisis, city leaders, like the waters, rose to the occasion. They did something innovative that would strengthen the riverbed as well as that Angeleno spirit: line the river with concrete, thus creating the mighty flood channel to the Pacific Ocean we all know and love today. The Los Angeles River is now host to wetlands rich with flora and fauna, happy kayakers, and, in times of little rain, moviemaking. Hello, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day!*

Just as the 1938 flood prompted determined, imaginative thinking, so today's circumstances are fostering strategic thought in both predictable (face masks, hand sanitizer, social distancing) and unpredictable (new uses of social media, video conferencing, the good old telephone) ways. The Opera League board recently telephoned you, our members, to reconnect with you, to say how much we miss being with you.

Like other cultural organizations, we are developing online programs for home-bound audiences. Over the summer we partnered with African Americans for LA Opera (AALAO), a chapter of the Opera League, to host our very first virtual recital. Our virtual gatherings featuring Community Educators are bringing the joy and enrichment of opera to our opera-starved souls. The long-term result, like that concrete channel, is that the Opera League has discovered how popular this "temporary" channel is. We are planning to continue using it even after the opera house has reopened.

I believe music and song are a basic form of communication between human beings, with or without the presence of a common spoken language. Thoughts and emotions are better expressed when set to music (opera!). That is why, during this time of forced sequestering and denied gathering, it is so wonderful that we can still share the deeply moving and uplifting experience of opera, even if only virtually.

Until we meet again in person, I encourage you to enjoy reading BRAVO, visit our website operaleague.org for features and upcoming events, hit us up on Facebook and Instagram, tell your friends about us and know that, with your continued support, we remain strong and hopeful.

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GUMPTION

By NICHOLAS DAHL

THE SAME DRIVE THAT LED FARAN SHAKER TO JOIN THE OPERA LEAGUE ALSO DRIVES HIM TO HELP TACKLE HOMELESSNESS.

When you talk to new Opera League member Faran Shaker, you get the sense that you are talking to man with gumption.

"You can't change your fate, so make the most of it," he says at one point as we discuss his life, Los Angeles, the art of opera, why he joined the Opera League and his initiative to educate professionals about homelessness in downtown L.A.

Faran is a man whose curiosity is brave. He's someone who isn't afraid of what he doesn't know or what makes him uncomfortable. A man whose curiosity doesn't just manifest as wavering interest, polite cocktail party conversation or some proud social media presence as it does for so many. No, Faran Shaker's curiosities lead to results, to action, to passion real and tangible.

Ask him where his love of opera originated, and Faran will tell you a story of enterprise, not romance. "As a child, my father would insist on exposing me and my sister to all kinds of music, all types of music from around the world." Yet he never really took a liking to opera at that early age. Then, about a year and a half ago, he challenged himself. "I said to myself, 'I am going to learn to appreciate different types of music genres that I have no affinity for.'" That included opera.

"I said to myself, 'I don't have to like it, I just have to appreciate it.' So, what I did was I slowly started immersing myself by listening to opera. We have so much access to opera nowadays through all the digital music services, I had no excuse. So I just started listening to opera playlists, and I started to dig it. I started to dig it more and more." Eventually, a friend took Faran to his first LA Opera performance, last season's *Eurydice*. He attended a League recital, and the rest is history. Now, that's gumption.

Born and raised in Wisconsin, Faran attended the University of Wisconsin for both his undergraduate and law degrees. After graduating, he spent a couple of years in Europe. In London, he volunteered at a school for kids with autism. "That experience, those kids—they changed the way I see human beings. We all have

different kinds of brilliance." After London, he spent some time in Prague to, in his own words, "just have a good time." After moving back Stateside, he practiced law for a while, until he decided to head out west to Los Angeles to work as a financial advisor. That was seven years ago.

Today, Faran lives and works in downtown L.A. It's his home and his neighborhood.

"Downtown is a great community. Although, anyone who lives here, works here will tell you that if you have even a five-minute conversation with somebody, the topic of homelessness will pop up."

According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, L.A. County is home to nearly 59,000 homeless people. Many of those people reside in downtown. Last year, the population of Skid Row, one of the largest concentrated populations of homeless people in the United States, grew 11%.

The increasing urgency of the situation and the frequency of those conversations started to wear on Faran. He felt ignorant of the issues involved and unsure of how to help. "I just got tired of saying the same old stuff: 'Oh, it's so awful, I wish I knew what I could do.'" This is where the gumption comes in again: "So, I decided to try to get involved. I reached out to nonprofits, I learned about their process, what they are doing."

Learning more about the homeless situation led Faran to insight: there is no quick fix because it stems from a series of complex problems. Faran believes the lack of effective solutions, the lack of creative problem solving around the issue arises from a lack of knowledge in the community.

"I have come across a lot of professionals: doctors, lawyers, accountants, small business owners, you name it, whose hands are up in the air. They care, but like me, just didn't know what to do."

Faran saw an opportunity to help bring the community of downtown L.A. into closer contact with information about homelessness so they can determine for themselves how they may be able to help.

"What I have tried to do is put together forums where the experts who specialize in the homeless situation can come speak to the professionals who work and the residents who live downtown." Instead of everybody trying to figure out what to do individually, the idea is to give people the opportunity to learn more together. "The more educated we are about the issues, the more sophisticated we can be about solving the problems."

Faran continues: "We are all part of a society. We are all citizens of our city and our state and our country. Therefore, we all have a responsibility to give back the best that we can. We have a responsibility to make society a better place." 🌟



OUR COMMON NOTE

CONTINUED FROM COVER

Many have been exploring areas for personal enrichment. Others have found enrichment in reaching out to aid and support friends and those in isolation who are being helped through the crisis by community organizations.

Use of Zoom to stay connected with friends and cultural organizations was a common theme, as well as connecting to online programming provided by LA Opera, the Metropolitan Opera and opera companies around the world, all the while renewing their relationship with their own home collections of opera recordings and DVDs.

Herein are a healthy sampling of responses we received from you, our hearty members, about how you have adapted to power through these Wagnerian times.

TELL US ABOUT A UNIQUE OR COMICAL EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE HAD WHILE ISOLATING, SOMETHING THAT HAS KEPT YOU FEELING POSITIVE ABOUT THE FUTURE.

ROMANCE IN THE TIME OF CORONA:

I had an early procedure at a surgical center and a new wonderful guy in my life fearlessly insisted on taking me. By the time we returned the city was ordered shut down! We have been together ever since—listening and watching some music/opera but not enough!

– Judith Hyman

I actually began walking around my entire neighborhood in DTLA and discovered beautiful buildings, stores and shops that I never realized existed since I always whizzed by them while driving.

– Faran Shaker

I've had only four face-to-face sit down chats in the last four months. Sadly, they were with four different doctors!

– Richard Bower

I have been able to keep in touch with the children at the preschool where I am a volunteer by scheduling time with them using Zoom. The children have learned how to use this technology with ease and are much better at it than some of the adults I know!

– Virginia Fawcett

My father and I held onto my grandmother's mobile home in Pismo Beach and I hardly ever made time to go there. It's been a great blessing since March to spend time there on multiple trips and enjoy the ocean and just getting away.

– Vaughn Winteta

I am finding more connections with people around the world. We really are all in this together!

– Debra J Myers, MD, PsyD

Pre-pandemic I used to get dinner at Norms in West Hollywood on Monday nights with some friends. During one evening there someone had lost their phone, and I called it so they could find it—it was crammed behind one of the booths. In the midst of the pandemic I got a voicemail from that person, that stranger—just checking in. Wishing me well. It was a beautiful spontaneous act of love and kindness.

– Nicholas Dahl

My daughter's August 8 wedding was planned in January to take place on Catalina Island. You can imagine our suspense as things kept changing. When they picked up their marriage license the clerk offered to marry them right then. But the venue has changed from a hotel to a lawn, and if the boat actually makes the trip we will be there on August 8.

– Ellen Gould

I am thankful for my backyard to be able to invite my dear and lonely friends for lunch or a glass of wine. The conversation always ends up how much we miss our friends from the Opera League, the programs, the volunteering and opera performances.

– Ruth Bachofner

I'm an opera and classical music buff. But my son makes music videos, mainly hip hop and rap. I was so proud that he made the live TV production of Da Baby. A statement for Black Lives Matter.

– Marian Mihail

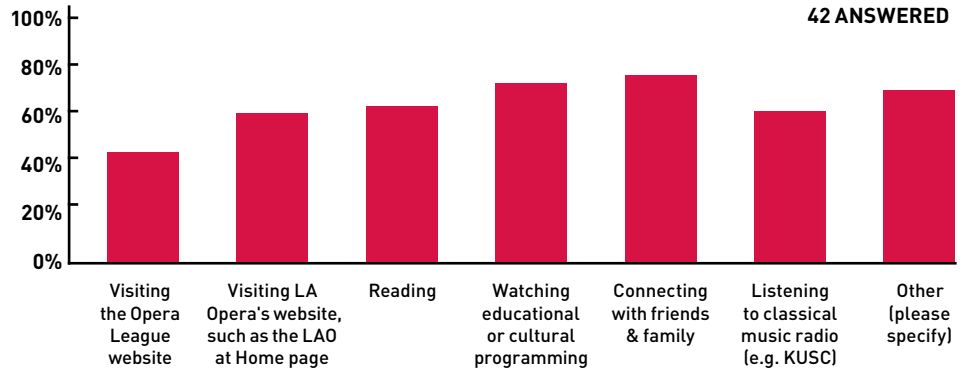
Rereading Marcus Aurelius

– Grant Barnes

"Connecting to each other through the web has been my saving grace. From classes to performances to zoom meetings, I have kept very busy and developing my inner life through music and creative thoughts and endeavors."

– Diane Eisenman

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING DURING THE PANDEMIC THAT HAS KEPT YOUR OPERA RECEPTORS TINGLING? PLEASE CHECK THINGS YOU HAVE DONE TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH OPERA. (OTHER ANSWERS SPECIFIED BELOW)



Catching up series on Masterpiece, HBO and Amazon Prime. Some art films on Criterion. As a psychotherapist I have also been "seeing" my people on FaceTime.
- Judith Hyman

Watching LAO & Met streams, putting all my LAO Performance Magazines in binders & reading the articles, listening to my opera CDs
- Cathy Foldvary

Taking a lot of walks around the neighborhood and (my favorite) down by the L.A. River. Nature has not succumbed to the COVID-19 virus. I am always greeted by one or more of the following: songbirds, dragonflies, egrets, turtles, ducks, geese, grey herons, lizards, ground and tree squirrels, coyotes and butterflies. Also, I

have been taking a few drives, once to the Dorothy Chandler to see the empty space.
- Laurel Howat

I watched 56 operas online (streaming for free) between March 16 and July 18, 2020: 32 productions from the Met, 19 from the Vienna State Opera and five from Berlin. That's 14 operas a month for four months straight. My "opera receptors" have been turbo-charged!
- Ray Busmann

Thank G-d for YouTube. I watch opera clips, political stuff, and some movies. I watched a couple clips of Roberta Peters as the Queen of the Night. She was great! And Roberta Peters was my first Queen of the Night back in 1967 at the Met. But I was too young and unexperienced to appreciate her greatness.

Jan Peerce, Rudolf Bing and James Levine were right to value Roberta Peters.
- Murray Aronson

Beginning in March, I have posted daily emails that pass along the Met's HD encores, each post containing the cast and convenient links to synopsis, performance stream, playbill, Educator Guide and pertinent, published articles. I have in reserve three years of fully-scripted opera talks (each coordinated with a custom DVD) accumulated from my twice-monthly opera talks at the Palos Verdes Bay Club [PVBC]
- Bob Bernard

Using telehealth to work from home. Taking local community college classes.
- Debra J Myers, MD, PsyD

Researching family ancestry, jigsaw puzzles
- Rosalie Kornblau

I am working a full day at home for my company. I now know what it feels like to be a tiger in the zoo. I have always been a happy tiger, but now I am a very frustrated tiger and want to escape this cage so I can again enjoy my opera friends.
- Elaine Hill

As a [LA Opera] Community Educator, creating talks to share via Zoom
- Larry Verdugo

"Watching so so many of the Met Opera in HD streams; listening to James Conlon's opera talks before watching/listening to the LA Opera Ring-a-thon; viewing the Coffee with Conlon programs; playing IL TRIVIATORE with Nicholas Brownlee; viewing Jeremy Frank's Opera Happy Hour programs"

- Virginia & Mike Fawcett



IN THE PIT

JENNY KIM, ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL HORN FROM WAGNER AND PHILIP GLASS TO A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

By DIANE EISENMAN

Have you ever heard of a mellophone? That is the horn they gave Jenny, this fourth-grader, when she started a career in the French horn.

The mellophone looks like a large trumpet but is actually a French horn in a more convenient shape for marching in a band. Jenny soon discovered that she enjoyed playing this unique instrument, and further, that she loved being unique herself. Being Asian, female and participating in a male-dominated brass world gave her the opportunity to stand out and be recognizable. Even though she had a shy nature, her competitive side came out and she began to excel in her skills. She didn't consider a career in horn until high school, when one of her classmates talked about pursuing the horn in college. Maybe she could do that too.

After her college audition at USC bombed ("Well, most horn players have bad days," she says), she traveled to New York and ended up at the Eastman School of Music, majoring in horn. Never one to quit, she returned to USC and received her master's degree there.

From the beginning of her career, Jenny has especially enjoyed the opportunity for community that music has provided her. She loves teaching college students, shepherding them into their careers while honing their musical skills. After substituting in several major orchestras in Los Angeles, she joined the LA Opera Orchestra in 2009 and found a great

group of friends in the horn section, unique since all four of them are from different decades. Her shy self really likes being in the pit, safe from the audience's stares as she performs.

Staying at home has been a welcome relief from her busy teaching and performing schedule. Jenny is grateful for the rest since she often spent four hours on the road every day driving to her teaching jobs around L.A., including Chapman University, Biola University, Cal State Long Beach and Cal State L.A. With all this extra time, she has taken up some fun tasks such as making masks for her friends, quilting, sewing and gardening. To her delight, she is taking piano lessons with her six-year-old son, Alden, and mostly trying to keep up with him. Taking

a break from horn duties means Jenny appreciates the horn more. She is using the time to assess how to improve.

Jenny has continued teaching but finds doing so online is a challenge. She finds it hard to maintain the excitement of learning from a distance and therefore feels the need to "pump up" the lesson with extra energy. Think teacher crossed with jester.



She foresees changes up ahead for students seeking careers in music. Studio recording jobs are already being done in home studios rather than in a group setting. To her students she points out the necessity to be flexible and adaptable in order to have a future in this business.

Being in the LA Opera Orchestra, a part-time position for orchestra members, suits Jenny well. She enjoys that her days are never the same. In the opera, she appreciates repeating the same music at least twice a week, absorbing it at a deeper level. For her horn part, her favorite opera is *Salome* because it is indeed very difficult. *Hansel and Gretel* demands two hours of nonstop playing, a major challenge for a brass player depending on lip strength. Same for Philip Glass's music. Jenny also had fun with LA Opera's production of *The Ghosts of Versailles*, "a grand production and so satisfying." Another fun and memorable experience was playing a Wagner tuba for the *Ring Cycle*. Jenny enjoyed the challenge of performing on such a special instrument.

"I hope that all of us can return to the Chandler very soon."

Outside of traditional opera, Jenny found yet more memorable experiences being part of a certain space opera: *Star Wars*. She played in the orchestral soundtracks of the recently concluded *Star Wars* sequel trilogy: *Episode VII-The Force Awakens* (2015), *Episode VIII-The Last Jedi* (2017) and *Episode IX-The Rise of Skywalker* (2019).

Fun as it was to play music for a galaxy far, far away, Jenny no longer feels safe doing studio work with a group of musicians all packed into one room.

In the meantime, she enjoys spending more time at home with Alden. In addition to piano, she helps him with online Korean language classes and swim lessons. They frequently visit Jenny's Korean-born parents who live nearby and are an important part of her and her son's life.

At the end of the day, though, Jenny still misses her friends and fellow musicians at LA Opera, and the excitement of being part of a top-notch ensemble.

"I hope that all of us can return to the Chandler very soon." 🌸

QUIZ FEVER!

A PANDEMIC OF FAMILY FEUDS

**Feeling trapped at home in this pandemic era?
Family driving you up the Wagnerian wall?
Hey, we sympathize, and on a high note to boot.**

Still, we hope your family drama isn't as stressful as it is for these opera characters. Mark Lyons, LA Opera's Associate Director of Communications and Publications, has just the balm to make you grateful you're not related to them.

1. *Il Trovatore* has a famously complex family backstory. Azucena is the birth mother of which character(s)?

- A. Manrico
- B. Count di Luna
- C. Neither of the above
- D. Both of the above

- B. Aegisth seduced Elektra's sister, Chrysothemis.
- C. Agamemnon was murdered by his wife Klytemnestra and her lover Aegisth.
- D. Elektra unsuccessfully tried to poison her mother, Klytemnestra.

2. In Verdi's *Falstaff*, Nannetta's father wants to marry her off to someone other than her sweetheart, Fenton. Who is Nannetta's father?

- A. Ford
- B. Page
- C. Doctor Caius
- D. Bardolph

5. Wagner's *Ring* cycle has numerous characters related to each other in various ways. Which of the following pairs is not related by blood?

- A. Siegmund and Waltraute
- B. Wotan and Fricka
- C. Siegfried and Brünnhilde
- D. Hagen and Mime

3. Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* also depicts an ill-fated planned marriage. Lord Capulet wants his daughter Juliette to marry whom?

- A. Mercutio
- B. Tybalt
- C. The Duke of Verona
- D. Paris

6. Not every sibling pair in opera gets along as well as Hansel and Gretel. Which of the following duos has a brother who actively seeks to thwart his sister's preferred suitor?

- A. Enrico and Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor*
- B. Sparafucile and Maddalena in *Rigoletto*
- C. Gunther and Guttrune in *Götterdämmerung*
- D. Lescaut* and Manon in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (*He's her cousin in Massenet's version.)

4. *Elektra*, by Richard Strauss, features what may be the most dysfunctional family in the entire operatic repertoire. What incident, revealed in backstory, launches the plot?

- A. Agamemnon banished his son Orest, who retaliated by killing him.

PERFORMANCE ART

They say art can be healing. If that's the case, we could all use a little bit of art right about now, wherever we can find it.

Better yet, in an example of how buds of artistic light can sprout even in the deepest pandemic darkness, we are thrilled to introduce you to the winners of this year's GRoW @ Annenberg LA Opera poster contest. **By TOM LADY**

GRoW @ Annenberg is a philanthropic initiative dedicated to supporting humanitarian efforts across the globe, as well as innovative projects in health, education, arts, the environment, civic and cultural life and more. Led by Gregory Annenberg Weingarten, Vice President and Director of the Annenberg

Foundation, the annual LA Opera poster art contest has been one of the GRoW @ Annenberg grantees for several years now.

This year's opera was *The Marriage of Figaro*. Hundreds of students from colleges across Southern California submitted their artwork inspired by this greatest of all

rom-coms. Thanks to GRoW @ Annenberg's generous support, LA Opera was able to select three student winners for cash prizes and bragging rights.

Better yet, all three student winners are now members of the Opera League.

Step aside, Count Almaviva, and let's get to know these budding artists.

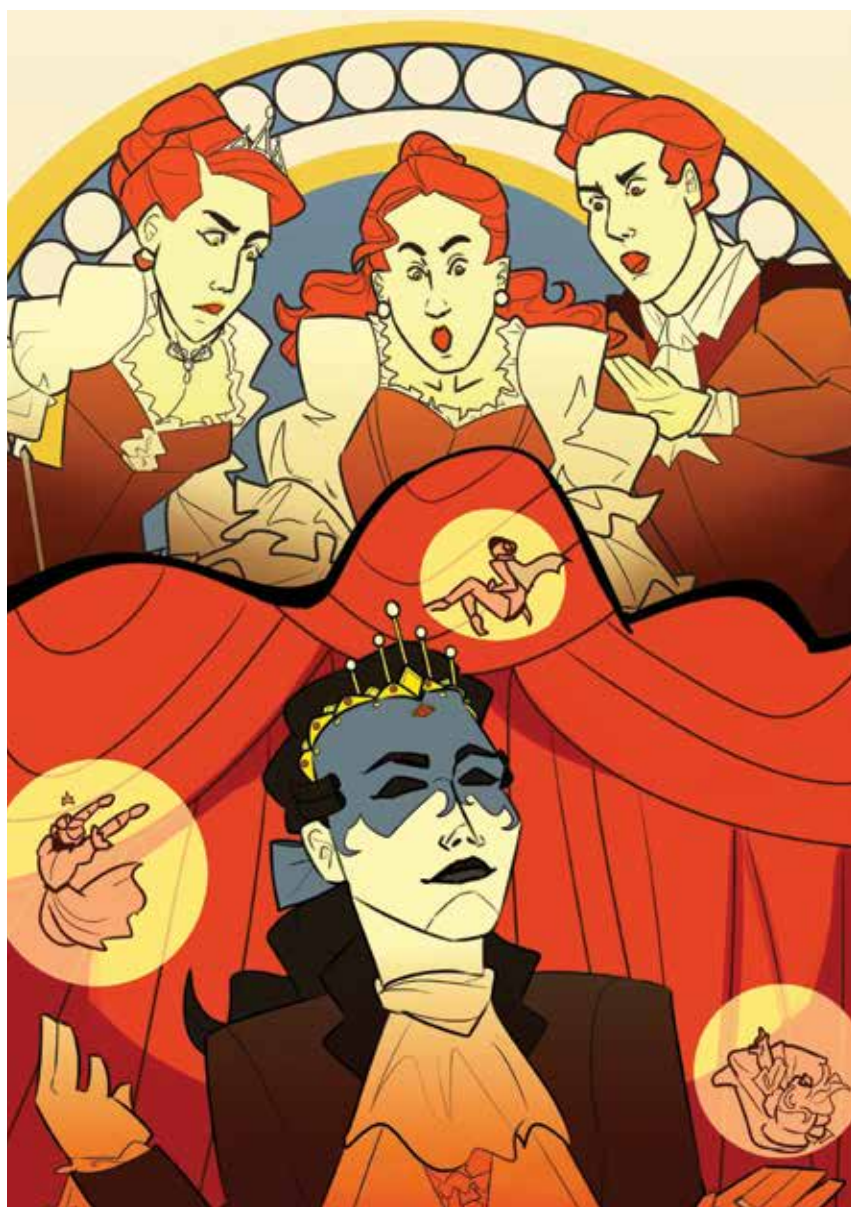


Photo by Ash Coughlin



FIRST PLACE: Ash Coughlin

SCHOOL: Cal State Fullerton

MAJOR: Illustration

PRIZE: \$5,000

YOU SAID THAT WINNING FIRST PLACE PUSHES YOU TO STUDY YOUR CRAFT MORE AND MORE. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS ONE STUDIES BEING AN ARTIST AND ILLUSTRATOR? DO YOU HAVE ANY ARTISTS WHOSE WORK YOU ADMIRE AND/OR WHOSE TECHNIQUES INSPIRE YOU?

Being an artist/illustrator is very much practicing expressing myself without the need to use words. I'm always reminded of the quote, "I thought I would be understood without words," by Vincent Van Gogh, in a letter to his brother Theo. Van Gogh is a big inspiration of mine not just because of his unique style, but also his unique outlook on life as a struggling man who still could make beautiful things.

THE LA OPERA WEBSITE SAYS YOUR WORK CENTERS ON FANTASY THEMES. WHAT SORT OF FANTASY GENRES ARE YOU INTO?

My fantasy themes do tend to lean into the *Dungeons & Dragons* sort of things. I've really become addicted to playing it over the summer due to having to create things and play off of people while doing it.

CAN YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAW OR WATCHED THAT INITIALLY MOTIVATED YOU TO BE AN ARTIST?

When I was young, my mom always took the chance to take me to museums and stuff like that. Growing up in a time where cartoons and animated movies were booming also probably helped spark an interest.

YOUR WINNING POSTER DESIGN IS AWESOME. HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT THAT DESIGN?

The poster was inspired by Art Nouveau from the beginning of the 1900s in France. It just so happens that I was able to visit Paris at the beginning of the year and got to take in a lot of the art and architecture. It was easy to take inspiration from there.



Photo by Josh Donner

SECOND PLACE:
Mona Saii
SCHOOL: California Lutheran University
MAJOR: Art
PRIZE: \$2,000

WHEN DID YOU KNOW YOU WANTED TO PURSUE ART AS A CAREER?

There wasn't a definitive moment when I realized that I wanted to pursue art. I have enjoyed drawing since I was very young. Throughout my childhood, I took drawing lessons from local classes. And on my own time I drew ideas from my imagination. I knew that regardless of the career that I choose, I will always create and continue to develop my body of artwork. When I was young, I was drawn to cartoons and movies that had an air of mystery and darkness to them. I really enjoyed Tim Burton movies.

YOU USE LOTS OF DIFFERENT MEDIA SUCH AS DRY POINT ETCHING, OIL PAINT, GRAPHITE PENCILS AND PEN. DO YOU HAVE A PREFERENCE?

When I first discovered dry point etching in my first semester at CLU, I became addicted to it. Dry point etching is the same medium that I used to create my poster design. Drawing is my favorite method of making art, and in a way, etching is like an extension of drawing. I enjoy creating illustrative and mysterious scenes that have a dark quality to them, and which invite different interpretations. Although I love to paint, dry point etching especially emphasizes my artistic style and the themes I like to explore.

HAVE YOU EVER WATCHED AN ANIMATED TV OR MOVIE AND SAID: "I WISHED I'D DONE THAT!"?

I feel particularly drawn to creative and stylized movies that explore the human condition and the unknown. Of the movies and shows that inspire me, I really enjoy the unsettling feelings and mysterious circumstances that emerge from the movie *Blue Velvet* and the TV series *Twin Peaks*.

SO CAN YOU TELL US HOW YOU ARRIVED AT YOUR POSTER DESIGN?

I listened to music. Music really helps to stimulate my imagination and build on an idea that I may already have. As I began to feel inspired listening to Mozart's music, and as I thought about the story, I finally formed my design. I think there is something very powerful about having a central figure in the middle of a composition, who is either in the middle of dramatic events or who is a significant figure in the story. Thus, I made the character Susanna the central figure in my design since her pursuit by Count Almaviva largely propels the story. Additionally, I wanted to represent the acts of manipulation and deceit in the story by showing the characters' hands pushing and grabbing at each other.



Photo by Juliann Hong

THIRD PLACE:
Juliann Hong
SCHOOL: Cal State Northridge
MAJOR: Illustration
PRIZE: \$1,000

YOU WANTED TO BE A VET, THEN AN ENGINEER... WHAT HAPPENED THAT FINALLY NUDGED YOU INTO WANTING TO BE A VISUAL ARTIST?

I've always enjoyed drawing but was often told I wouldn't be able to make a living off of art. As a result, I searched for other, "safer" options. During my first year in college, I put all my energy into clubs, job fairs and even extra classes. In the end, I was disheartened by my complete lack of interest in it all and took a year off. After accepting that I've always wanted to become an artist but was just too afraid to commit to it, I decided that I'd rather regret becoming an artist than regret never even trying.

ARE THERE ANY ARTISTS WHO INSPIRE YOU?

Lately, I've been fascinated by the designs of Kazuma Kaneko. I love mythology, so I enjoy seeing his depictions of mythological figures and creatures. I admire that his designs can range from elegant to goofy to monstrous, while maintaining a sense of consistency between all of them. Another artist whose works I'm enjoying these days is Seong Ryul. Her depiction of daily life and the mundane combined with their use of watercolors and wobbly lines create a dream-like sense of nostalgia. I like how she balances silliness and realism in her art.

YOU SAID THAT THE GROW @ ANNEBERG POSTER CONTEST WAS YOUR FIRST-EVER ART CONTEST. WHAT ARE SOME OTHER COMPETITIONS YOU'VE GOT YOUR EYE ON?

My friends and I recently collaborated on a design for a utility box mural contest.

SO CAN YOU TELL US HOW YOU ARRIVED AT YOUR POSTER DESIGN?

The comedic and chaotic feeling of the story stood out to me, so I wanted to focus on the fun of the hijinks, schemes and misunderstandings. I thought that having a 3x3 grid pattern of women interrupted by the characters could be a fun way of expressing that. At the front is Susanna handing the love letter to the Count because I felt that was a key moment in the plot. As for the colors, I thought something cheerful and modern would be interesting. 🌸

CATCHING UP WITH CONLON

By GARY W. MURPHY

Back in February, LA Opera's Music Director James Conlon was in the midst of a hectic schedule. He was conducting Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at Teatro dell'Opera in Rome while simultaneously preparing for a series of Mozart concerts at RAI National Symphony Orchestra in Turin where he serves as principal conductor. On a rare day off, he flew to Austria and stepped in for an indisposed colleague and conducted the 2020 Vienna Opera Ball at the Vienna State Opera. In addition, he was preparing for LA Opera's spring season of *Pelléas et Melisande*, and *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Then COVID-19 hit.

In quick succession, Turin and the rest of northern Italy shut down, *Eugene Onegin* closed on February 29 just as all of Italy began to shut down. Conlon headed east, first stopping at Oxford University for a series of lectures, and then on to Los Angeles where a full slate of spring performances and activities would soon be put on hold as we began our quarantined forced sabbatical.

For many, these past months have been a time of deep introspection, and for others, a time of renewal. Some have found their inner bread maker while others learned a new language or studied the work of a little-known composer.

For Maestro Conlon, followers soon found him at LAOpera.org's "James Conlon's Corner" which features his essays and conversations, including "Coffee with Conlon," a program where he answers questions from listeners, and "Conlon at Home," a series of nearly 20 lectures covering a wide swath of topics from the world of opera. Most notably, LA Opera (LAO) celebrated the 10th anniversary of its historic Ring Cycle with the "Ring-a-Thon," which featured Conlon not only conducting all four of Wagner's monumental works but providing commentary before, during and after the audio performance broadcast on LAOpera.org.

As summer drew to end, we donned our masks and found time to visit with James Conlon in his L.A. studio.

BRAVO: THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO SPEAK TO BRAVO. THESE PAST SIX MONTHS HAVE BEEN A TRYING TIME FOR US ALL, NO DOUBT. FOR THOSE WHO WORK IN THE PERFORMING ARTS, IT HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING. WHILE SINGERS CAN STREAM INTIMATE RECITALS FROM THEIR LIVING ROOMS, A CONDUCTOR NEEDS A BIT MORE. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN MAKING MUSIC DURING THE PANDEMIC?

JAMES CONLON: This is the first time in my life, literally since I started conducting in my late teens, that I have gone this long without conducting. I am amazed at how busy I am, nevertheless. There are, of course, Zoom meetings and many behind-the-scenes activities that require my attention at LAO. I have taken to making podcasts, fourteen in all, plus remastering my 2010 pre-performance talks before the Ring Cycle.

Most of all, I have gotten to spend a lot of time with my family and a lot of time to think, reflect, read and imagine the future.

BRAVO: FOR MANY YEARS YOU MAINTAINED YOUR WORKING STUDIO IN MANHATTAN. BUT DURING THIS TIME, YOU DECIDED TO MOVE IT TO A STUDIO IN YOUR LOS ANGELES BACKYARD. HOW IS THE UNPACKING GOING? IS THAT WORK COMPLETED?

JC: Actually, I closed the Manhattan studio over a year ago, but I never had time to unpack the boxes in my L.A. studio until

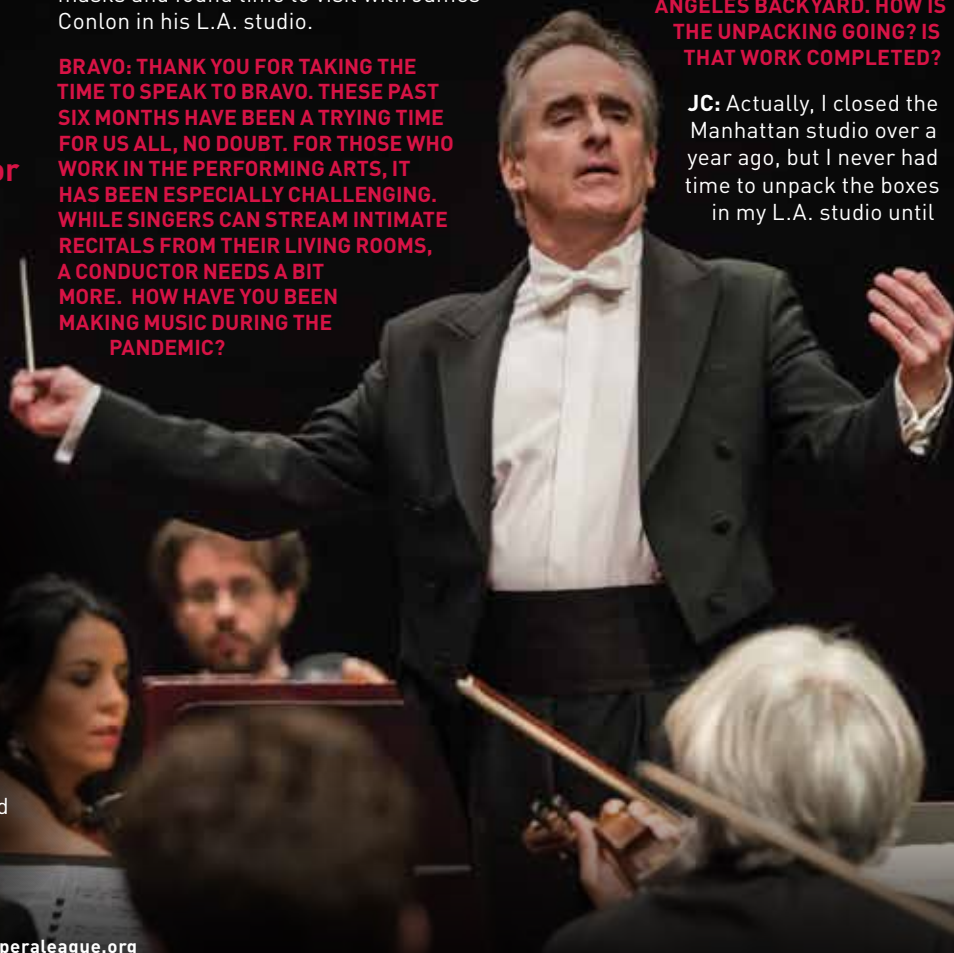


Photo © Piju Luce/Orchestra RAI



Photo Courtesy of Vienna State Opera

(LEFT TO RIGHT) Piotr Beczala, Maria Santer, Aida Garifullina, Dominique Meyer and James Conlon

the COVID virus hit. That job is a work in progress, but I am happy to have all of my scores in one place.

BRAVO: HAVE YOU COME ACROSS SOME LONG-LOST TREASURES AS YOU'VE GONE THROUGH YOUR THINGS?

JC: It is mostly scores and books, the latter can certainly be considered treasures. There is also a mountain of concert programs, press articles and family memorabilia. I don't know what to do with all of that just yet.

BRAVO: EARLIER, I SPOTTED A PHOTOGRAPH OF A VERY YOUNG JAMES CONLON WITH THE LEGENDARY MARIA CALLAS. HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

JC: The photo was taken celebrating the night of my debut at Juilliard in 1972. The opera was *La Bohème*, and I had taken over at relatively short notice from the indisposed Thomas Schippers. Maria Callas, who had been giving her famous master classes that year, had seen me rehearsing and recommended me to the president of the Juilliard School to take over the production. It was a very happy moment for me, and she looks happy too.

BRAVO: I'M SURE YOU'RE IN CONTACT WITH THE MUSICIANS. HOW ARE THE LA OPERA ORCHESTRA MEMBERS DOING DURING THIS TIME?

JC: Every individual deals differently with the Covid virus crisis. I can say without exception everyone wants to get back to work. The unifying factor is that desire to return and see LA Opera back at full steam. We will get there, and their enthusiasm for that end matches the feeling in the entire company

BRAVO: LIVE PERFORMANCES ARE SO SPECIAL, AND WE MISS THEM TERRIBLY. WHAT IS THE ONE THING YOU ARE LOOKING TO DO ONCE WE GET BACK INTO THE THEATRE?

JC: As you know, we have tried to maintain the productions of the 2020-2021 season when we reopen. The feeling is that the balance of repertory and casts was especially good, and that we don't want to lose that. We have postponed (not canceled) the fall productions but have been able to reschedule them for the fall of 2021, miraculously, with many of the casts virtually intact. I am looking forward in the immediate future to conducting a streamed performance with the Young Artists. We will present an opera called *The Anonymous Lover* (*L'Amant Anonyme*) by Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges. He was a Black composer who was a contemporary of Mozart and Haydn. He wrote marvelous music, a half a dozen operas (mostly lost) and copious symphonic works. His music has been largely neglected. We are addressing that neglect and streaming this live on November 14.

BRAVO: THANK YOU, MAESTRO, AND WE SHALL SEE YOU ONLINE, AND HOPEFULLY, VERY SOON IN THE OPERA HOUSE. 🌟

YAPPING WITH THE YAPS

By JUDITH HYMAN

SINGING THEIR WAY THROUGH A PANDEMIC

LA Opera's Young Artist Program is one of the features of our resident opera company that sets it apart. These Young Artists (YAPs) land prominent roles in mainstage productions at LAO and other opera companies even while still in the program.

Which begs the question: How have the YAPs been holding up during these Wagnerian times?

Joshua Winograde, LAO's Senior Director of Artistic Programs, says that when they realized the world was going virtual at the start of the pandemic, he and the team put in place a curriculum with six areas of focus: recordings, practice videos, live coaching and lessons, language lessons, recitals and independent projects.

Clearly these tireless YAPs are not about to let their operatic muscles atrophy. As for how they're handling the day-to-day in between, let's hear them tell it.

MICHAEL J. HAWK When my international debut as the title role in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the Daegu Opera in South Korea was cancelled at the end of January, I wanted to take control of one aspect of my life: my health. Since February 3rd, I have lost 74.4 lbs, and I'm feeling better than ever. In terms of singing and training, I've had a significant amount of time to fine-tune language and intention in my work. I was recently featured on the Santa Fe Opera's digital summer offerings finale, from the recorded workshop of *M. Butterfly*: premiering "The Perfect Woman," Rene Gallimard's act three aria from Huang Ruo's opera.

ALAYSHA FOX I decided to get a studio near the opera house while the prices were greatly reduced due to COVID. I'm thinking of it as a long-term investment as I'll likely be with the program for another two years.

LOUIS LOHRASEB Things have been very busy here, as [fellow YAP] Erica [Petrocelli] and I have gotten engaged!! I proposed to her on July 2, and we have set our wedding date for August, 1, 2021. Erica is currently in the middle of moving to Zurich to join the opera studio there. She and I spent the quarantine together in our apartment in L.A., being musically active together, and making over four recitals for the LAO at Home opera series. We were in fact the first recital to go live on March 17. In August I started a recital series at the Elm Court Mansion in Butler, PA. This year will be all virtual, but my collaborators and I hope to turn it into a larger series next year.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



Photo by RuthABClegg

OPERA: FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE AND WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN R. JACKSON FROM
AFRICAN AMERICANS FOR LA OPERA (AALAO)

By NICHOLAS DAHL

John Jackson has a vision for the future of opera. A vision that asks us “to rethink everything.”

It is a future that brings more African Americans and People of Color into the opera as artists—as singers, as set designers, as members of the orchestra, as costume creators. And it is a future that brings more diverse audiences to the opera or, as Jackson posits, “the opera to more diverse communities.”

John Ray Jackson grew up in Gary, Indiana and was first introduced to opera in high school. “For most people... Or let’s put it this way. The people that I know? Interest in opera is definitely something that develops over time. When you’re young, you’re either fascinated by it or you’re bored by it. When people ask me if I like opera, I say, ‘Yeah, I do.’ But there are certain kinds of opera I like and some that I don’t. It’s like movies. Of course I like movies, but I don’t like all of them.”

At 17, Jackson left Gary to study classical saxophone at Indiana University in Bloomington. In 1983, after stints in Atlanta, San Francisco and New York, he moved to Los Angeles, where he now lives in the Leimert Park neighborhood. In March of this year, Jackson began a new role as National Vice President of Major Gifts for the NAACP.

Jackson says his most rewarding experiences with LA Opera have been through African Americans for LA Opera (AALAO), the chapter of the Opera League that aims to increase awareness of opera across L.A. AALAO is a platform and community for Black opera lovers as well

as an incubator for Black opera singers who need pathways into the classical music business.

As a former classical musician and singer, reaching back and helping the next generation of young artists come up is a passion of John Jackson’s.

“You can learn to be and become a pop singer on your own if you are intrinsically talented. You can do that. There are many, many pop singers who have done that. Classical singing is not something you can do on your own. You are going to have to be trained. Someone is going to have to invest time and money and a whole myriad of things to get a person viable for classical performance.”

Jackson believes that opera is not for everyone, but can be loved by anyone because it is storytelling through the universal language of music and drama.

“Opera at its best is a live, multimedia experience that anyone can enjoy, even if they don’t speak the language, even if they don’t understand the genre or the history. Opera can be made elemental, the story can be interpreted through those elements. Anyone who wants to, can identify with what is happening on the stage through song and relate it to their own life.”

However, representation matters.

When you see yourself reflected somewhere, it is easier to relate, to identify, to feel connected. The problem is, we still don’t see enough diversity on stage, backstage or in arts administration.

“When you look at every layer of an opera company, who do you see there?” Jackson asks. “When you look on the boards, who do you see there? When you look at staff,



Photo by John R. Jackson

who do you see? When you look on stage, who do you see? When you look in the orchestra pit, who do you see? When you look backstage, who do you see? When you look in the wig department, costume department, who do you see?”

Another thing that matters? Bringing opera to where the people are. It should not be all about what happens at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

“I think it’s important to create beauty where people live,” Jackson says. “We need to rethink everything. The most prestigious institutions bring people away from where they live and into the prestigious arts neighborhood and into the grand performance halls, but how can institutions actually work in and exist in the communities themselves? It’s not about everybody coming down to the Dorothy Chandler. Let’s use opera to create beauty in a variety of communities and not just where we think it is supposed to be produced.”

Through AALAO, John Jackson is devoted to seeing that worthy mission through.

If you would like more information on African Americans for LA Opera, please visit operaleague.org and select AALAO along the top menu. 🌟



ANONYMOUS NO MORE

THE OPERA LEAGUE'S RAY BUSMANN DISCUSSES THE BRILLIANT BUT NEGLECTED COMPOSER JOSEPH BOLOGNE

By GARY W. MURPHY

YAPPING WITH THE YAPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

ROBERT STAHLEY Since the end of the season I've been reading a lot and exercising more. It can be difficult to motivate myself to practice some days, but I remind myself that even a little bit will be beneficial in the long run. It's been wonderful to see many of my colleagues performing virtually, and I love to hop on the livestreams to see what they're working on. I've been working on expanding my skills in the kitchen with new recipes that fit my budget. Money is tight for us all right now so I'm trying to stay within my means and take advantage of many outdoor activities that California has to offer. I want to visit my family in Florida. To avoid flying, I'm thinking I'll plan a camping road trip to get there.

TIFFANY TOWNSEND I've been writing a lot in my journal and discovering a lot of new music in a wide array of musical genres. I've also been having Zoom parties with loved ones, and friends to keep in touch which have been very helpful. To keep up with training, I've been exploring a list of arias and roles that I've been wanting to try. I have also been trying to practice piano more often.

BRENDON SHAPIRO I am currently preparing to serve as coach and pianist for a production of *Tosca* at The Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice in Phoenicia, NY. What makes this production so exciting is that it is a drive-in style performance, meaning that the audience will all stay in their cars while the live performance in front of them is also projected onto large jumbotron screens. Additionally, I am working with my husband, Omar Najmi, who is both a composer and tenor, on applying for grants and fundraising for a workshop of his upcoming opera, *This Is Not That Dawn*. Stepping into the role of co-producer, in addition to musical director, has been extremely rewarding for me, and I am very excited to continue championing new music and contemporary opera in whatever way I can during the pandemic.

SYLVIA D'ERAMO During this pandemic I have tried to stay sane by gardening, refinishing furniture I found at thrift stores, perfecting my homemade pasta and practicing singing daily. I have been studying German, and that has helped me stay focused and goal driven. Also, most importantly, I got engaged to the best person on the planet! 🌻

Check out operaleague.org for the complete article, including a fuller description of Joshua Winograde's six-part *At Home* curriculum for YAPs.

For nine years, Opera League member Ray Busmann has brought the world of opera to people throughout greater Los Angeles as a volunteer Community Educator. Recently, he created a trilogy of talks for the Opera League's virtual gatherings series entitled, "If It Weren't For Opera..." wherein he shares the fascinating stories about some game-changing personalities that he (and probably we all) would never have heard about if it weren't for opera.

The third talk in the trilogy takes place on October 3. That is when Ray will introduce eager Leaguers to a brilliant but neglected composer: Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, the composer of LA Opera's upcoming *The Anonymous Lover*.

BRavo: WERE YOU AWARE OF THIS LITTLE-KNOWN COMPOSER BEFORE LA OPERA (LAO) ANNOUNCED ITS PRODUCTION?

Ray Busmann: Just four days before LAO announced its production, I had read Marcos Balter's fascinating article in *The New York Times*, titled "His Name is Joseph Bologne, Not 'Black Mozart'." You can imagine how excited I was to learn that LAO would be presenting the West Coast premiere of the only surviving opera by this 18th-century polymath!

BRavo: HOW DID YOU BEGIN YOUR RESEARCH INTO THIS FASCINATING STORY?

RB: I always start with Google, YouTube and Wikipedia, and there is a lot of information already out there. Also, I was delighted to find two children's books at the library about Joseph Bologne. I love to start my research with books for kids, because I get a clear overview in simple terms. From there I can dive deeper into my research.

BRavo: WERE THERE ANY SURPRISES DISCOVERED IN YOUR RESEARCH?

RB: There were so many wonderful surprises. He was the best fencer of his generation before he was 20, the most accomplished violin virtuoso in Paris at age 25, he inspired the young Mozart, and this is the son of an enslaved Senegalese

woman from Guadeloupe we're talking about. Another big surprise was learning about his well-documented fencing match in London against the Chevalière d'Eon, who was a transgender woman. In 1787! In the presence of the Prince of Wales! I just love discovering historic gems like that.

BRavo: JAMES CONLON WILL CONDUCT THE PREMIERE ON NOVEMBER 14. WHAT SHOULD AUDIENCES LISTEN FOR PRIOR TO EXPERIENCING *THE ANONYMOUS LOVER*?

RB: *The Anonymous Lover* is a light comic opera, so I think it will be very accessible without any prior study of the music. Also, there is no commercial recording of this opera available yet. But the Chevalier de Saint-Georges channeled the speed and agility of his swordsmanship into his music, so I would recommend listening to his Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 3 No. 1 [Recording by Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, easy to find on YouTube].

BRavo: WHY DO YOU THINK BOLOGNE'S MUSIC WAS NEGLECTED FOR SO LONG? AND DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE A RESURGENCE?

RB: The French Revolution almost cost Joseph Bologne his head. By the time the Reign of Terror was over, the musical taste of the Parisian society had moved on. Bologne's music was associated with the "old regime." Although he had been a bridge to Beethoven and the Romantics, he simply got lost in the shuffle. Fortunately, over the last 20 years, musicologists and orchestras are rediscovering his story and his music. So, yes, absolutely, the resurgence is in full swing, and as always, LAO is leading the way. 🌻



Photo by Paul Outlaw

Ray Busmann's "If It Weren't For Opera... Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges" takes place on Saturday, October 3 at 1:30pm. Please visit operaleague.org for more information.

BOARD @ HOME

MEET THE NEW ADDITIONS TO THE OPERA LEAGUE BOARD OF DIRECTORS By TOM LADY

When the 2020-21 season kicked off July 1, the Opera League found itself confronting a decidedly different world than anything we have seen before. That is why we count ourselves lucky to have seven incoming board members, six newbies plus one veteran returning for a new term, whose breadth and depth of experience in community engagement and the arts have set up the League to take on this new frontier.



Photo by Bill Green

BILL GREEN

After a long and storied career at Caltech and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Bill Green has already built a long and storied career with the Opera League. A Community Educator for ten years now, Bill's extensive experience includes multiple stints on the board of directors and executive committee as the head of various teams, including Education, Membership and Communications (now Marketing and Communications, or MarComm). As part of MarComm, Bill contributes to BRAVO (including this issue's cover story) and helps manage the League website's event calendar.



Photo by Nicholas Dahl

NICHOLAS DAHL

Nicholas is a marketing consultant who just arrived in Los Angeles last year, having previously lived in New York where he volunteered at the Metropolitan Opera for the Opera Guild's education programs. He has brought that passion to the Opera League where he volunteers on the Education team, the Marketing and Communications team (check out his two articles in this issue!) and on our dedicated Cast Dinners crew.



Photo by Holly Harrie

HOLLY HARRIE

Holly Harrie has been one busy volunteer since she retired after decades as an engineer at IBM and Northrop Grumman. Since 2012 she has been a Music Center Symphonian while also volunteering with the LA Philharmonic Affiliates at Large. Her duties for the Opera League include

Shop at the Opera manager, cast dinners, seminars, gatherings and other special events.



Photo by George Solomon

GEORGE SOLOMON

Even during his extensive career in the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries, George found time to get involved in the community, serving for a time on the board of PAWS/LA (Pets are Wonderful Support) for patients living with HIV and other chronic debilitating illnesses. Upon joining the Opera League, George joined our Social team where he has volunteered at seminars and master classes as well as last year's first-ever League podcast.



Photo by Hovik Harutyunyan

HOVIK HARUTYUNYAN

Hovik is the owner and principal planner of Harutyunyan Events, a premier wedding and event planning firm based in Los Angeles. His work has been featured in numerous industry publications, including *Vogue* and *Martha Stewart Weddings*, and he has been a guest contributor for several media outlets as well as authored the chapter, "Of Wedding Fashion" in the book *Weddings, Weddings, Weddings*. Hovik is a proud volunteer for the Opera League as well as for Los Angeles Ballet and is an active member of several young professionals' groups.



Photo by Peggy J. Knight

PEGGY J. KNIGHT

After nearly 40 years as an interior designer, Peggy now fills much of her time with volunteerism and community engagement. She sits on the board of directors for African Americans for LA Opera (AALAO), a chapter of the Opera League, while also volunteering for the League's Education team. Peggy is also a veteran docent at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) where she has led school children on exhibition tours.



Photo by Cathy Foldvary

CATHY FOLDVARY

Trained as a registered nurse, Cathy has a long career in healthcare in multiple capacities, including with the Cedars-Sinai Health System. These days she takes classes through UCLA's Senior Scholars Program and assists with lunches for the homeless. Cathy is a tireless member of the Opera League's Education team where she has volunteered for Elementary School Matinees, Saturday Mornings at the Opera, Open Door Days and Opera Prep.

CAMINO DE OPERA: A SPECTACULAR JOURNEY OF THE SPIRIT

By PAULA CORREA

A PORTRAIT OF 93-YEAR-YOUNG OPERA LEAGUE
VOLUNTEER ELEANOR T. GNUP



Photo by Valentina Gnup

“My husband is the chief reason for my spectacular life,” says 93-year-young, 20-year Opera League veteran volunteer Eleanor T. Gnup.

A grand mutual passion for opera and all the arts was the focal point of her adventure-filled life.

Eleanor enjoyed her 65-year marriage with her soulmate Eddy, who died at 94 a few years ago on her birthday. “He was being taken care of at home by me and caregivers. While he was still able to communicate with me the night before, I perceived he felt that this was his only birthday gift to me—leaving quietly.”

The longtime Fullerton resident first became enamored with opera in the 1970s when she and her husband were introduced to the annual Opera Weekend in Idyllwild in Southern California’s San Jacinto Mountains. Led by the colorfully controversial *Los Angeles Times* music critic Martin Bernheimer, these musical experiences increased their ever rising fascination with opera. In 1980 Eleanor and Eddy joined Bill Glassman’s opera class held every Thursday night at Fullerton Community College, and continued attending for the next 29 years.

“It was a very exciting time,” she remembers. “Mr. Glassman inspired us to explore San Francisco Opera by making many field trips, the first one in 1981 to Seattle for the *Ring Cycle*. In San Francisco we were standees, sometimes standing in line at 7am to buy tickets for that day’s performance. That’s where I saw and heard the incomparable Luciano Pavarotti in *Aida*.”

Eleanor met many opera stars of the day: the late legendary coloratura soprano Beverly Sills, the still much-in-demand soprano Renée Fleming and bel canto singer Samuel Ramey, among many luminous others, including Anna Netrebko’s *Lyudmila* debut 25 years ago. She and her husband became so well known in the opera world that they received a trove of perks. Often they were invited backstage to meet their idols, invited to lunches and were given complimentary tickets to opera-related events.

These superfans of Richard Wagner’s *Ring Cycle* saw it an astonishing 28 times, including 13 in Bayreuth. Eleanor rhapsodizes about the Music Festival Theater Wagner built in Bayreuth exclusively for performances of his works. “The acoustics are the best in the world,” she enthuses. “The orchestra pit is recessed under the stage, unseen by the public, and the building is primarily constructed with wood which enhances the clarity of sound.” Experts tend to agree.

Early on the two opera enthusiasts traveled far and wide to enjoy their new favorite musical genre: Santa Fe, Chicago, San Diego, San Francisco, New York... Then opera fever enticed them to a new venture. They decided to move to Europe after Eddy had seen a job ad for an agent selling life insurance to American soldiers living on military bases. “We put our belongings in storage and took our two children, then four and six, and traveled to Germany where we lived for two years,” Eleanor says.

Their wanderlust and pursuit of ever more opera led them to many European cities, including Paris, Verona, Rome, Athens and Warsaw. Eleanor was particularly thrilled with the VIP treatment they received for their 50th

wedding anniversary by the owner of the famed Tour d’Argent Restaurant in the Eiffel Tower.

To balance their hours of sitting in opera houses, they were also physically active. “We just loved hiking and running,” Eleanor says. “For 17 years Eddy and I got up very early in the morning to run two miles, then have breakfast and go to work.” They also walked 150 miles of the Camino de Santiago trail, made popular by actress Shirley MacLaine in her 2001 memoir, *The Camino: A Journey of the Spirit*.

Eleanor’s resume includes case worker with the American Red Cross, a high school librarian and librarian at San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant. Eddy was a Chartered Life Underwriter specializing in life insurance and pension design. Born in Camden, New Jersey, Eleanor holds a B.A. in English Literature and Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Master of Management in Library and Information Science from the University of Southern California.

Her interest in volunteering for the Opera League was sparked 20 years ago when she came across a yummy item about cast dinners on the League website. “I love to cook, so I joined the Opera League. In 2001 the dinners were served in the green room.” From 2007-09 Eleanor sat on the Opera League Board of Directors.

Still highly disciplined, Eleanor maintains a rigorous daily regimen. In the mornings she searches online for all things opera. Around 150 opera lovers receive her daily updates. Living with her daughter Andrea, an award-winning poet and English teacher, Eleanor cooks, reads and takes care of herself. “I’m independent,” she says. “My daughter and I take care of each other.” ☀

OPERA LEAGUE CALENDAR OF EVENTS / FALL 2020

Please note that all of the below events will be conducted virtually via Zoom. Event details, including how to join, will be broadcast via operaleague.org with supporting eBlasts.

OCTOBER

SEMINAR

The Art of the Conductor

Sun, Oct 18, Noon

SPEAKER: **Louis Lohraseb**

GATHERINGS

If It Weren't For Opera...

Part 3: I Would Not Know a Thing

about the Chevalier de Saint-Georges!

Sat, Oct 3, 1:30pm

SPEAKER: Ray Busmann

SPONSOR: Orange County Gathering Group

HOSTS: Lorna Blancaflor and Christa Marks

Lawyers in Opera

Sun, Oct 11, 1:30pm

SPEAKER: Bill Green

SPONSOR: Hollywood-Hancock Park-East

San Fernando Valley

Gathering Group

HOST: Anne Russell

Draculas for All Ages: What Sweet Music They Make

Sun, Oct 25, 1:30pm

SPEAKER: Bettyna Bluwal

SPONSOR: Santa Clarita Gathering Group

HOST: Kim Jones

NOVEMBER

GATHERINGS

Is There a Doctor in the House?

Sun, Nov 8, 1:30pm

SPEAKER: Steve Kohn

SPONSOR: West San Fernando Valley

Gathering Group

HOSTS: Karen and Steve Kohn

Clothes Make the Man, Even if He's a Woman

Sun, Nov 22, 1:30pm

SPEAKER: Ron Streicher

SPONSOR: San Gabriel Valley Gathering Group

HOST: Michael Sholer

DECEMBER

GATHERINGS

Opera and the Silver Screen

Sun, Dec 6, 1:30pm

SPEAKER: Larry Verdugo

SPONSOR: Beverly Hills Gathering Group

HOST: Ruth Bachofner

Bugs Bunny and Mickey Go to the Opera

Sun, Dec 20, 1:30pm

SPEAKER: Steve Kohn

SPONSORS: South Bay Gathering and

Downtown L.A. Gathering Groups

HOSTS: Laurel Howat (South Bay), Kathy

Crandall and Libby Wilson (Downtown L.A.)

