



Movers & Shapers

MA Top 30

MUSICAL AMERICA PROFESSIONALS OF THE YEAR



2017

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SPECIAL REPORTS
december 2017

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MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

Introduction



If “Movers and Shakers” is a familiar moniker for bigwigs and high rollers, “Movers and Shapers” represents a perhaps less visible but arguably more important category. These are the individuals who are actually “shaping” programs, practices, and perceptions of the performing artists. Thus this year’s crop of Top 30 Pros includes the director of training programs

at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Music Institute, an opera dramaturg who literally helps composers/librettists *shape* their work, a music critic whose unique commentary contextualizes music with fresh perspective, an opera company specializing in work by women composers, several musicians (and one lawyer) turned diversity advocates, an arts matchmaker who finds the right schools in the right cities for the right teaching artists, a travel guru who seamlessly moves large groups of classical musicians around the world, and a violin salesman who expertly fits the right instrument with the right artist.

As has become our custom, we find these sung and unsung heroes by canvassing our readers. Every year the nominations grow in quantity and quality, to the point where we encourage folks whose nominations weren’t included this year to try again in 2018. In the final selection, we try to achieve a balance of men and women and encourage diversity, so the Top 30 you see are not only the best at what they do, but also represent a cross section of personalities and professions.

Hats off to all.

Regards,

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Movers & Shapers

Musical America's annual tributes this year are dedicated to the pros who keep the business of the performing arts in top physical and artistic shape. Here are the Top 30 of 2017, as nominated by their peers.



DOUGLAS BECK

Director, Artist Training Programs
[Weill Music Institute, Carnegie Hall](#)

Douglas Beck came to Carnegie Hall in 2011 and lists among his accomplishments the 2012 launch of the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America (NYO-USA), which, since its 2013 debut, has evolved into a multi-pronged international initiative. NYO-USA hosts an intensive two-week summer residency of training for gifted young musicians ages 16-19 as selected from online audition videos and written essays. Following the residency, at SUNY Purchase in Harrison, New York, the orchestra embarks on a national or international tour, which over five summers has taken it to Europe, China, and Latin America. Celebrity conductors have been Valery Gergiev, David Robertson, Charles Dutoit, Christoph Eschenbach, and Marin Alsop, with faculty drawn from first-desk players in leading American orchestras.

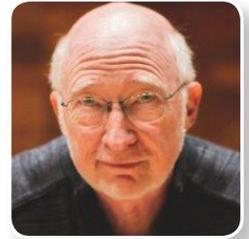
In summer 2016, Beck and his team launched NYO2, a second orchestra for musicians ages 14-17 in partnership with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Next summer a new NYO Jazz program will be added to the mix.

Beck also oversees all of the Weill Institute's workshops and master classes for young professional artists, including

[The Song Continues](#) with Marilyn Horne, and programs with Joyce DiDonato, Jonathan Biss, the Tallis Scholars, Kronos Quartet, and many more.

Prior to Carnegie Hall, Beck was executive director of the late Lorin Maazel's Châteaueville Foundation, based in Castleton, Virginia, overseeing a program that grew from five chamber concerts in 2002 to, by 2011, wide-ranging full-year offerings, from symphonic concerts and opera productions to an annual summer festival, young artist residencies, and various education and outreach activities. During this period (2002-11), he also served as general manager/producer for Maazel's opera, *1984*, at a number of major European houses. Previously he was executive director of the inaugural Maazel-Vilar Conductors Competition (in 2000) and, before that, worked with ICM Artists (now Opus 3 Artists). He is a graduate of Harvard College, where he studied history and literature and served as both classical music director and program director of WHRB-FM, a University-owned commercial radio station that serves the Boston metropolitan area.—Richard S. Ginell

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BOB BECKER
 Founding Member, [Nexus](#)
 Composer/Arranger

As a composer, arranger, and founding member of the Nexus percussion ensemble, Bob Becker has influenced virtually every aspect of percussion performance and repertoire in the profession. And, he is renowned as a virtuoso xylophone soloist.

Becker's milestones range from being featured on marimba and xylophone with Steve Reich and Musicians in classics like *Music for 18 Musicians*, to his exquisite performance on steel drums with Nexus on Toru Takemitsu's *From me flows what you call Time* for symphony orchestra and percussion, to his infectious arrangements of ragtime music for xylophone. He was timpanist of the Marlboro Festival Orchestra under Pablo Casals, he toured as drummer and percussionist with the Paul Winter Consort, and he has been a soloist with the New York Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestra. He is also a designer of instruments and has his own line of xylophone mallets with Mallettech and cymbals ([Bob Becker Bow Cymbal](#)) with Sabian.

Nexus was founded in 1971 at the University of Rochester, and the four-member group, long based in Toronto, is still going strong, with a new CD, *Home*, that includes works for percussion by Michael Burritt, Bill Cahn, and Libby Larsen.

Becker, whose first instrument was a marimba as a seven-year-old growing up in Allentown, Pennsylvania, is also a master of world music. In a blog, he confesses that he honed his craft on the tabla while watching television. Now, it appears, he's hooked.

"I love TV!," he writes. "I got into it back when I was doing what Indian musicians call riaz. That's a very intense and extended kind of practice—usually in big chunks of time. I found it easier for me to sustain full-out, high-intensity technique practice for, say, four or five straight hours if I had something to keep my mind off the fatigue."—John Fleming



SARAH BURMAN
 Director of Operations and Education
[South Dakota Symphony Orchestra](#)

As director of operations and education for the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, Sarah Burman does the jobs held by multiple people at other orchestras: stage manager, personnel manager, equipment manager, and tour coordinator. She also oversees educational programming, said to serve more than 15,000 people annually.

Burman is key to the orchestra's [Lakota Music Project](#), an innovative community engagement program. Now in its eighth

year, LMP was developed under Music Director Delta David Gier to cultivate understanding between whites and Native Americans, who have often been divided by racial tension in South Dakota. Concerts at Lakota Sioux reservations such as Rosebud and Pine Ridge and at the Crazy Horse Memorial have featured the SDSO in collaboration with Native American composers and performers like the Creekside Singers, a Lakota drum group, and Bryan Akipa, a cedar flute soloist from the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe.

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"I've learned a lot from our native partners," says Burman, who studied voice and oboe at Valparaiso University, where she got a bachelor's degree in music business in 2005. "When I first heard their music, I thought, 'Wow! This is really different,' but now that I've listened to it for several years, I'm more familiar with how it works as an art form. It's an oral tradition, so it's always a challenge to bring the orchestra players, who read notes from a page, together with Native American musicians who are trained orally."

Burman, who previously worked in production for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the New World Symphony, has been

instrumental in the success of other SDSO community engagement programs, such as the Retirement Series of chamber music concerts at nursing and retirement homes and [Music as Medicine](#), with ensembles from the orchestra performing at healthcare facilities.

"The biggest thing we try to avoid with our programs is one-offs," she said. "You know, you go into a community, do your thing, it's really awesome, and then you leave. We don't want to be that organization. We want to have ongoing, sustainable relationships with these communities." —John Fleming

ANNIE BURRIDGE
General Director & CEO
[Austin Opera](#)



Annie Burridge became general director and CEO of Austin Opera in fall 2016, arriving at the start of its 30th season with a nonpareil fund-raising pedigree. In her previous 11 years with Opera Philadelphia, where she began as associate development director and worked her way up to managing director, she is credited with increasing contributions by 183 percent, according to the *Austin Business Journal*.

She was also instrumental in its rebranding and in shifting its self-perception "from Turner Classics movies to HBO," as she described in a marketing video. Her efforts paid off in Opera Philadelphia's successful two-week O17 Festival in September, which included three premieres and was funded in part by a \$2.5 million grant that Burridge helped secure from the Miami-based Knight Foundation. The adventurous event prompted David Patrick Stearns to note in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, "the current spirit of Opera Philadelphia is not to follow taste but to lead it."

Burridge, who has master's degrees in opera and vocal performance from the New England Conservatory, a master's

certificate in nonprofit administration from the University of Pennsylvania, and a bachelor's degree in music from Penn State, is continuing her innovative approach in Austin, where she has appointed Michael Solomon (former press representative for the Washington National Opera) as the first director of audience experience. He will collaborate with the marketing and development departments with the goals of serving current patrons while attracting new ones—the ever-present dual challenge of the performing arts.

"It's not the case that retired audiences want to see Puccini and that 25-year-old audiences just want to see something contemporary," Burridge tells *The Austin Statesman*. "It's a lot more complex. Austin Opera is already doing that really, really well. But we also must serve the contemporary audience. We are not competing with other arts companies, but rather with Netflix and HBO. So the more sophisticated and nuanced the understanding we can have of our audience and potential audience, the better we are going to be able to connect with them." —Vivien Schweitzer

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CARLA DIRLIKOV CANALES

Founder, CEO, & Artistic Director

[The Canales Project](#)

Carla Dirlikov Canales is an opera singer turned diversity advocate. The mission of her Canales Project is “to give voice to issues of identity and culture through music and conversation.” With an eclectic roster of more than 25 artists, the project presents programs such as “Finding Your Voice,” a partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Tucson, Arizona, that encourages children to use music and storytelling to address personal challenges; and “Hear Her Song,” which celebrates women changing the world.

The Michigan-born Canales, a mezzo-soprano of Bulgarian and Mexican descent, tells her own story to explain the project’s origins. “I spent most of my childhood traveling back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico, and as an adult, traveling all over singing opera. So when it came to defining my identity, I checked the ‘other’ box. Well, that made me feel that I didn’t belong in any box, and that was not a good feeling, because it’s human nature to want to belong. I soon realized there is a box where I belong: the ‘all’ box.”

She cites a U.S. Census Bureau projection that, by 2044, more than half of the nation’s population will be part of a minority race or ethnic group. “Then everyone will belong to the ‘all’ box. This is why I decided to use my voice to try to help others on their journey from the ‘other’ to the ‘all.’”

As an opera singer, Canales is known for the title role of Bizet’s *Carmen* with companies around the world. In 2014, she was the first singer to win the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, awarded to emerging young black and Hispanic classical musicians. Apart from the Canales Project and a number of TED Talks, her 2018 calendar includes singing in a Leonard Bernstein centenary program at the Kennedy Center and two Mahler programs in China next spring: The Second Symphony with Shenzhen Symphony Orchestra in Shenzhen, in April, and *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* with the China National Symphony Orchestra in Beijing, in June.—John Fleming



BASIL CONSIDINE

Founder and Artistic Director

[Really Spicy Opera](#)

“Cultivating drama that burns and music that sates.” That’s the mission of Basil Considine’s Really Spicy Opera of the Twin Cities, purposefully illustrated by the photo on its webpage of a young female splashing a glass of red wine in the face of a male companion.

A composer and alumnus of the University of California at San Diego and of Boston University, Considine started Really Spicy Opera in 2006 as a resident ensemble of BU. Relocating to Minneapolis in

2013, the company began to make noise when Considine’s opera *The Frat Party* was a hit at the 2014 Minnesota Fringe Festival.

In the 2017 season, Really Spicy Opera exported its production of Considine’s *Game of Thrones: The Musical*—a send-up of the HBO series, according to the Twin Cities’s *Pioneer Press*—to Hawaii’s O’ahu and Maui Fringe festivals in January and to the Tampa International Fringe Festival in May. The company also mounted the premiere of playwright Deborah Yarchun’s comedy *A Pickle*,

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which enjoyed a soldout run at the Minnesota Fringe Festival in August. RSO presents the occasional conventional opera as well, as per the *Rigoletto* at Minneapolis's Capri Theater in 2016, in honor of the company's 10th anniversary.

For 2018 through 2020, RSO will operate under the [Women in Opera Initiative](#), producing only world premieres in which at least 60 percent of the cast is female, 50 percent of the music-libretto team is female, no female lead dies, and the cast contains no maids, nuns, prostitutes, courtesans, or escorts.



PAUL CREWES

Artistic Director

[Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts](#)

Nestled behind the facade of Beverly Hills's 1933 art-deco-style former post office, the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is the city's main arts complex. Two years after its October 2013 opening, the Wallis hired its first artistic director, British theater producer Paul Crewes.

Since the beginning of his first full season (2016-17), Crewes has overseen the expansion of the Wallis agenda on two stages: the 500-seat Bram Goldsmith Theater and the 150-seat Lovelace Studio Theater, the latter of which is convertible into a nightclub, The Sorting Room.

Currently, all of the music and dance events are imported; theater is balanced between three or four in-house productions and six or seven offerings from outside presenters. Crewes is dipping a cautious toe into contemporary music this season by presenting Chris Rountree and his new music band wild Up; also scheduled is violinist Daniel Hope playing Max Richter's re-composition of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*, along with the original.

"One of the things I was keen to do was establish that we were programming theater, dance, and music and that [audiences] were

The Initiative was developed, RSO explains, in reaction to the fact that the top 5 most-performed operas in the world (*La Traviata*, *Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Carmen*, *La Bohème*) have female protagonists who die before the final curtain and who are vastly outnumbered by male leads. This "trivializes and stereotypes women on stage," opines Considine's group. They have a point there.—Richard S. Ginell

getting equal balance," Crewes says. "This season, we've managed to get that right." Crewes also aims "to animate the space and the building so that it really feels alive. We've encouraged people to come early and stay afterwards. We've opened a bar two hours prior to the shows and one hour afterwards."

Crewes's efforts are making a difference: Compared to the previous season, 2016-17 saw the number of performances expand from 200 to about 330 and audiences increase by nearly 25 percent.

Prior to the Wallis, Crewes was CEO and executive producer of Great Britain's Kneehigh Theater. He established collaborations with the National Theater, the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Berkeley Rep, overseeing several touring productions including Noel Coward's *Brief Encounter*, which came to the Wallis in 2014. Also while at Kneehigh, Crewes raised sufficient funds to build a 750-seat geometric mobile venue, The Asylum Tent, which can be packed up and transported to serve many communities around Kneehigh's Cornwall base.—Richard S. Ginell

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WILL CRUTCHFIELD

General and Artistic Director

Teatro Nuovo

The closing of the 20-year old Bel Canto at Caramoor program in 2017 heralded the end of an era at the genteel country estate. Fortunately, Will Crutchfield, its director and conductor, will continue to champion the bel canto repertory with a new endeavor called Teatro Nuovo. The first performances are scheduled for July 28 to August 5 at SUNY Purchase with a lineup that features Rossini's *Tancredi* and, true to form, a real rarity: Simon Mayr's *Medea in Corinto*.

Teatro Nuovo goes "far beyond" the original Bel Canto series. "Through a major expansion of the training program, the collaboration with SUNY Purchase, and the move to our own dedicated festival, we are now poised to offer much more both to the opera-going public and to the young musicians who come to us in the summer," said Crutchfield in announcing the program.

The Caramoor Bel Canto series was launched at a time when some naysayers dismissed the genre as merely a lightweight,

formulaic vehicle for empty virtuosity. Crutchfield's performances over the years helped to change that perception, revealing new insights into well-known works and bringing rarities like Bellini's *Il Pirata* and Donizetti's *Maria di Rohan* to light.

Crutchfield began his career as the youngest-ever classical music critic of the *New York Times* (to which he contributed from 1983 to 1989), before switching career tracks to conducting, teaching, and musicology. In addition to presenting scholarly editions of both popular and little-known repertory, Crutchfield has worked extensively with young artists to develop the fundamentals of a solid bel canto technique. Some of the singers he has mentored enjoyed significant career breakthroughs at Caramoor, such as soprano Angela Meade with Rossini's *Semiramide*. He'll continue working with rising stars at Teatro Nuovo, whose summer performances will be preceded by a five-week program for both singers and instrumentalists, ensuring a healthy future for the artform.—Vivien Schweitzer



MARGO DRAKOS

Co-founder and CEO

ArtistYear

The U.S. government-funded [AmeriCorps](#) has a distinguished track record of sending citizens into communities to help with everything from opioid addiction to rebuilding from natural disasters. Now, thanks to Margo Drakos, an alumna of the Curtis Institute of Music and former assistant principal cellist of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, AmeriCorps's outreach efforts also include arts education.

Drakos is a co-founder and CEO of ArtistYear, a nonprofit created in 2014 that pairs underserved schools with young artists, who work alongside teachers to provide quality arts instruction. In its pilot year, ArtistYear sent three recent Curtis Institute grads to teach in Philadelphia schools; in the spring of 2016 a \$1 million grant from private sources allowed ArtistYear to expand to nine graduates. In September 2017, ArtistYear received a \$1.45 million

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grant from AmeriCorps to fund 25 recent arts graduates, who will teach in schools in New York, Colorado, and Philadelphia over a three-year period.

At a time when arts education is often the first on the chopping board and when musicians have fewer opportunities to carve out a traditional performing career, ArtistYear is providing an invaluable service to both talented graduates and deserving children. According to the nonprofit's website: "ArtistYear believes that the arts—as vehicles for critical-thinking, empathy, self-discipline, and civic engagement—are imperative for a thriving

democracy. Our vision is to develop engaged citizen-artists committed to strengthening the economic and social fabric of our nation. How? By providing every underserved student in America with access to arts education via national service."

In addition to being a talented musician and educator, Drakos is also an entrepreneur in the digital sphere. She is co-founder of [InstantEncore](#), a provider of mobile and web services that enables performing arts organizations to showcase artists, promote event information, stream music, and retain a robust social-media presence.—Vivien Schweitzer



ELENA DUBINETS
Vice President of Artistic Planning
[Seattle Symphony](#)

As vice president of artistic planning at the Seattle Symphony since 2006 and a musicologist completing her fifth book, Elena Dubinets sits at the intersection of scholarship and orchestra management. She has presided over the commissioning of about 50 new works in Seattle, such as *Become Ocean*, the John Luther Adams tone poem on global warming and rising waters that won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for music and a Grammy Award for the orchestra's recording of its premiere. Other commissioned composers include Anna Clyne, Giya Kancheli, Du Yun, Michael Gordon, David Lang, Mason Bates, Agata Zubel, and Nico Muhly.

"As a musicologist, my primary field is contemporary music," says Dubinets, who works closely with Music Director Ludovic Morlot. "I know quite a few composers all over the world and have a lot of experience working with them. We typically come to a joint decision about which composers would fit our program and start working with them, identifying exact parameters for a piece, including length and a timeline for submission of the score and parts

for each musician. We never dictate anything besides approximate length and instrumentation, because we want composers to create their own work."

Dubinets has made a specialty of studying Russian émigré musicians. Her forthcoming book is *Joining the World: The Musical Migration from the Former USSR*. In 2014 she organized a conference co-hosted by the Seattle Symphony and the University of Washington (where she teaches) on the subject. The conference accompanied an all-Russian program by the orchestra featuring the U.S. premiere of *Night Butterflies*, a piano concerto by Alexander Raskatov, who left Russia in the early 1990s.

"There's certainly no single style that you can point to when speaking of Russian composers in exile," said Dubinets, an émigré herself who has a doctorate from the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory and has lived in the United States since 1996. "Each composer decides on his or her own how and when they want to relate to Russia musically." —John Fleming

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Brava!

Opera Columbus congratulates

Peggy
Kriha Dye

on winning the
Mover & Shaper award

General & Artistic Director **Peggy Kriha Dye's** vision is for Opera Columbus to be the premier regional opera company in the United States, that launches the careers of the best emerging talent in the world. Our engine is innovation, respecting tradition but also breaking the rules. Every Opera Columbus production is new and original, and we are open to new ways of storytelling through our artform. Innovative approaches and new programming are essential to Opera Columbus' continued artistic growth and community relevance, and collaborations have been key to many of our recent successes.

Because of Peggy's leadership, Opera Columbus is an active member of Columbus' uniquely collaborative arts community, which creates opportunities for artistic and marketing partnerships that support innovative programming, expanded visibility/reach, and operational efficiency, well beyond anything one organization could do alone.

Congratulations, Peggy Kriha Dye on the recognition of all you've accomplished at Opera Columbus.



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PEGGY KRIHA DYE

Artistic Director
Opera Columbus

Peggy Kriha Dye has brought an artist's perspective to the task of rebuilding Opera Columbus, which was so beset by financial woes that for several years it was essentially defunct and presented only touring productions. Dye, a soprano appointed artistic director in 2014, has introduced programs that are breathing new life into the company. Most significant is a partnership with the Juilliard School's Artist Diploma in Opera Studies program, whose singers get cast in the Ohio company's productions.

"When Opera Columbus dissolved, it was a great opportunity to redefine what the company would be," says Dye, a Juilliard graduate. "In talking with other artistic directors and friends, the advice was, if you're going to be successful, you need to make it personal. For me, my passion is helping young singers. And if I'm going to make emerging talent our focus, then of course Juilliard is the place to go."

The 2017-18 season-opening production of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* featured several singers from Juilliard's ADOS

program, including recent graduate tenor Miles Mykkanen as Peter Quint and soprano Christine Taylor Price as the Governess. The staging was by noted director Stephen Wadsworth, who heads the storied school's program as well as the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program of the Metropolitan Opera.

Another innovative series in Columbus is Opera on the Edge, in which traditional works are cut to an hour, sung in English, and performed in bars, such as *#UncleJohn*, an adaptation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Dye has had a busy performing career, which included the role of Stella in the 1998 premiere of André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* at San Francisco Opera. She has sung with the Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and other leading companies. In October she sang the role of the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* with Toronto's Opera Atelier.—John Fleming



CORI ELLISON

Opera Dramaturg, Teacher

Cori Ellison fell hard for opera at the age of seven, stumbling upon a couple of Mario Lanza singles that had belonged to her late grandfather. Literally ever since, she has devoted herself to the art form, first as a theater student and then as an aspiring young singer, all the while gathering the other skill sets—research, translating, curating, writing, teaching—that would eventually converge in a pioneering career in opera dramaturgy. The homepage of her website quotes Nicholas John, English National Opera's late

dramaturg and an early role model, who defined his role as "the conscience of an opera house." In 14 years as staff dramaturg at the original New York City Opera, followed by five years in the same capacity at the Glyndebourne Festival, Ellison has strived to be just that. In the process, she has contributed powerfully to establishing the role of the dramaturg in American opera circles.

These days, the lion's share of Ellison's dramaturgy work is as a freelance "opera whisperer," a creative partner to composers,

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librettists, and commissioners in the lengthy, painstaking process of conceiving, constructing, and realizing new operas. Some of her most notable achievements include Glyndebourne's *Hamlet* by Brett Dean and Matthew Jocelyn, Opera Philadelphia's *Breaking the Waves* by Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek, and Opera Saratoga's *The Long Walk* by Jeremy Howard Beck and Stephanie Fleischmann. Ellison taught and mentored the latter three artists in the [Composer Librettist Development Program](#) at American Lyric Theater, where she is a founding faculty member. She is currently serving as dramaturg for Canadian Opera's *Hadrian* by Rufus Wainwright, as well as on other commissions

at organizations including Pittsburgh Opera, Arizona Opera, Beth Morrison Projects, White Snake Projects, Indiana University, and Crane School of Music.

Ellison continues to work as a production dramaturg as well, on ventures including *Orphic Moments* and *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* at National Sawdust, and Cincinnati Opera's upcoming production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. In a full-circle gesture, she also honors her early inspiration and professional roots by serving on the Vocal Arts faculty at Juilliard and coaching emerging singers at the Ravinia Steans Music Institute and the Crested Butte Opera Studio.



ANDREA D. FESSLER
Founder and Executive Director
[Premier Performances of Hong Kong](#)

When Andrea Fessler started Premier Performances Hong Kong in 2007, she had no idea what to expect as a presenter of chamber music. "I totally jumped in at the deep end with my eyes shut."

Today, PPHK is celebrating the 11th season of its recital series and, in January, the ninth annual Hong Kong International Chamber Music Festival, of which violinist Cho-Liang Lin is artistic director. Artists who made their Hong Kong debuts with the organization include pianist Yuja Wang, violinist Nicola Benedetti, and guitarist Miloš Karadaglić. In June, the Danish String Quartet makes its Hong Kong debut under PPHK's auspices.

"The audience in Asia is much younger than you'll find in North America or Europe," says Fessler. "Whenever I go to a concert in London, I would say that two-thirds of the audience is above the age of 60. That is not true in Hong Kong or China. A lot of families, a lot of students go to concerts, and I think that's why people are saying the future of classical music is in Asia."

PPHK has a program that brings performances, workshops, and teacher training to schools in Hong Kong. Since 2012 it has made 240 school visits, reaching 2,300 teachers and 60,000 students. "At least 30 percent of the kids we reach have never seen a live performance before," she says.

The Canada-born Fessler graduated from Harvard Law School in 1991 and was a corporate lawyer before making the plunge into chamber music. She has been a resident of Hong Kong since 2004. "For me, being a corporate lawyer was like being a project manager, so maybe presenting a concert isn't so different from purchasing a company," she says. "They both require project (and people) management skills, attention to detail, and lots of contracts."

She has no regrets about leaving the law for music. "I'm far more engaged and stimulated and passionate about what I'm doing now than I ever was as a lawyer." —John Fleming



BERNHARD FLEISCHER
 Managing Director
 Bernhard Fleischer Moving Images

A native of Salzburg, Bernhard Fleischer as a boy attended the city's famed festivals, remembering in particular the first *Carmen* he saw at age 14 in 1985 when Herbert von Karajan was the artistic overseer.

It seems fitting, then, that in 2006 Bernhard Fleischer Moving Images's biggest project to date took place at the famed festival. It was the celebration of Mozart's 250th birthday, and BFMI was there to film Salzburg's productions of all 22 of the composer's operas. The mammoth undertaking, a collaboration with Unitel, Deutsche Grammophon, Decca, and TDK, was recorded in HD and surround sound and released that year as *Mozart 22*, a boxed set of 33 DVDs. "*Mozart 22* was a great milestone where we could prove our logistical and artistic reliability, delivering 22 operas within three months to the broadcasters and labels," Fleischer said.

BFMI, founded in 1998, has more than 200 productions to its credit, ranging from a 2003 TV special on Russian soprano Anna

Netrebko *The Woman—The Voice* (which Fleischer considers his "breakthrough"), to the LA Phil Live series of concerts in HD transmitted to movie theaters in 2011 and 2012, to a Baroque musical journey through crime novelist Donna Leon's Venice. For a video of Lang Lang's 2013 recital at London's Royal Albert Hall, the company was one of the first classical music producers to use 4K cameras, a format that provides much higher picture resolution than HD.

"We are seeking projects that have the potential to be watched and appreciated not only by the classical target audience, but by a broader group of potential viewers," Fleischer said. "We see no reason why a music or performing arts project should be less interesting by its nature than other genres." —John Fleming



NOREEN GREEN
 Artistic Director and Conductor
 Los Angeles Jewish Symphony

Noreen Green has been the most energetic advocate for Jewish music and music-making in the Los Angeles area for more than a couple of decades now. "Noreen is an incredible force who is in constant motion," says Audrey Yoder, the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony administrator.

Green founded the LAJS back in 1994, and also serves as the music director of the Valley Beth Shalom synagogue in the LA

suburb of Encino. The orchestra draws upon the klezmer tradition but also advocates the music of composers like Fanny Mendelssohn, Bloch, Korngold and Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and has presented more than 20 world premieres. Taking advantage of its location in one of the entertainment capitals of the U.S., Green's orchestra has played host to performers like Theodore Bikel, Leonard Nimoy, Randy Newman, Billy Crystal, Marvin Hamlisch, and Hershey Felder over

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the years in many locales, including Walt Disney Concert Hall and UCLA's Royce Hall.

One of the orchestra's more innovative initiatives is "A Patchwork of Cultures: Exploring the Sephardic-Latino Connection," a project whose mission is to forge links between Los Angeles's large Jewish and Latino communities, the latter of which is much-coveted by cultural factotums yet seldom reached. These are in-school workshops in which children are introduced to the symphony orchestra and also hear music from Sephardic and Latino cultures. The workshops culminate annually with a free concert at Valley Beth Shalom in the fall. Already, the 16-year

program has served over 70,000 people, with about 1,000 children from Jewish schools and low-income elementary schools expected to participate in 2017.

In April, Green and the LAJS released their first recording on the Albany label, *Women of Valor*, an oratorio by Andrea Clearfield that celebrates ten women from the Old Testament with female vocal soloists and narrator. The piece was given its world premiere by the LAJS in 2000 at Royce, and (full disclosure) your correspondent reported in *The Los Angeles Times* that "Green produced a vital response from her very good orchestra."—Richard S. Ginell



SEAN MICHAEL GROSS
Executive VP and Chief Strategy Officer
21C Media Group

When Sean Michael Gross joined 21C Media Group in 2007, MySpace was still popular and Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube had just recently been created. In 2009 Gross capitalized on these developments and founded 21C's digital media and creative division, spearheading the company's transition from a traditional PR agency into a digital media, consulting, and branding business. Soprano Anna Netrebko, who has worked with Gross since 2005, describes him as a "pioneer" and credits him with playing a significant role in leading the music industry into the digital age.

One of the four senior managers at 21C, Gross was recently named executive vice president and chief strategy officer, advising clients about how to best harness digital media to promote their work, communicate with audiences, and engage fans across multiple platforms. Those clients—whom he helped recruit—include Joshua Bell, Daniel Barenboim, Gustavo Dudamel, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Audra McDonald, and Yo-Yo Ma.

Gross's digital strategies have often proven fruitful: in 2012, for example, when ticket sales for Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* at the New York Philharmonic were lackluster, Gross orchestrated a lighthearted YouTube campaign featuring Music Director Alan Gilbert that launched two weeks before show time. The resulting buzz and media coverage helped jump-start ticket sales for what turned out to be a highlight of Gilbert's tenure.

A native of Los Angeles, Gross graduated magna cum laude in 2005 from New York University with a degree in music business. Before joining 21C, he worked in artist management at IMG Artists (where he first represented Netrebko). Gross is often invited to speak about arts marketing and PR, and has shared his insights with organizations including the League of American Orchestras and MIDEM.—Vivien Schweitzer



NEETA HELMS

Founder/President

Classical Movements

Music is the universal language, and Neeta Helms speaks it around the world. As founder and president of Classical Movements, now in its 25th year, she specializes in tours for orchestras and choruses, with clients ranging from the National Symphony Orchestra to the Yale Glee Club. Based in Alexandria, Virginia, the company does about 60 tours a year, and has brought music to 145 countries.

Helms is a risk-taker whose breakthrough came in 1993, when she organized a tour of the Choral Arts Society of Washington with the National Symphony Orchestra and legendary Russian conductor and cellist Mstislav Rostropovich to the former Soviet Union. Rostropovich led a free concert in Moscow's Red Square that drew more than 100,000 people. "It was probably like touring the United States with the Beatles, that was what it was like going to Russia with Rostropovich," she says. "It was so exciting. The world was changing." Last spring, Classical Movements handled its 30th NSO tour, again to Russia.

Classical Movements also produces choral festivals in Washington, DC, and South Africa, as well as a summer festival for

young singers and instrumentalists in Prague. Since 2005, the company has commissioned composers from 20 countries to write more than 50 works. In 2015, it commissioned 10 American composers for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's 100th anniversary. This year, Syrian clarinetist-composer Kinan Azmeh became the company's first composer-in-residence.

Helms grew up in a musical family in India. She began studying piano at age four, sang in public at five, and went on to earn a BA in economics and an MBA. She has lived in the United States since 1986.

What annoys her most about travel? "Airlines get on my nerves. They are absolutely the most difficult part of our job." Some tours take special resourcefulness, such as those in Cuba, which has a shortage of musical instruments. In June, Classical Movements took both the Minnesota Youth Symphonies and the Stanford Symphony Orchestra there. "Our biggest challenge, believe it or not, was finding and renting the timpani." —John Fleming



JIM HIRSCH

Chief Executive Officer

Chicago Sinfonietta

Ethnic diversity is the trademark of the Chicago Sinfonietta. "It's a real point of differentiation between us and every other orchestra in the United States," says Jim Hirsch, chief executive officer since 2004.

The Sinfonietta, founded in 1987 by the late African-American conductor Paul Freeman, was validated in its commitment to diversity in 2016 when it was awarded a \$625,000 grant from

the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for "redefining what classical music looks like through its innovative programming and commitment to diversity." The foundation noted that, while less than five percent of American orchestral musicians are people of color, at the Sinfonietta the share was 35 percent and people of color make up almost half the orchestra's audience. Plus, more than half of the 26-member board can be categorized as diverse.

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*Congratulations to Neeta Helms, Classical Movements' Founder & President,
on being named a 2017 "Mover and Shaper" by Musical America!*

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Hirsch is a leader in the League of American Orchestras's efforts to promote greater diversity, and the Chicago Sinfonietta professional development program [Project Inclusion](#) is a model for orchestras seeking to cultivate minority musicians, conductors, and administrators. He believes that a key to the success of the Sinfonietta, whose budget has grown by 65 percent during his tenure, is its willingness to "mess with the orchestra model" by expanding traditional classical repertoire to include collaborations with jazz and rock musicians, dance and theater artists, and other performers. "We want to stretch how people perceive orchestral music, to open some doors so it becomes relevant for a broader range of people."

Chicago Sinfonietta's 2017-18 season—its seventh under Taiwan-born Music Director Mei-Ann Chen—includes boundary-stretching programs such as the annual Day of the Dead concerts pairing Mozart's Requiem with works by Mexican and Latin American composers; and "Praise and Punk: The Ending of All Endings," featuring a gospel choir and the punk marching band Mucca Pazza. Also on the agenda is Project W, a year-long initiative to highlight contemporary women composers with commissioned works by Clarice Assad, Reena Esmail, Jennifer Higdon, and Jessie Montgomery.—John Fleming



CERISE JACOBS

Co-Founder, Librettist
[White Snake Projects](#)

Cerise Lim Jacobs was a Boston lawyer for more than two decades. Then, three years after she retired, she found a new calling. In 2005, as a birthday present for her husband, she started to write a libretto for a song cycle based on a Chinese folk tale. Upon his prodding to go deeper, she expanded it into an opera, for which composer Zhou Long would write the score. The result was *Madame White Snake*.

To fund the project, Jacobs and her now late husband formed a 501(c)(3) corporation called White Snake Projects, which raised the money to put on the work with Opera Boston in 2010. It went on to win the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Music.

But Jacobs didn't stop there. White Snake Projects ultimately became an expansive commissioning program to include seven operas over a span of five years using original Jacobs stories. She expanded her original idea into a trilogy—*Madame White Snake*, *Naga*, and *Gilgames*—under the umbrella name of

Ouroboros Trilogy, which was performed in an all-day marathon in September 2016 at Boston's Cutler Majestic Theater.

Last September, her *REV. 23*, described as "a farcical hellish opera which traverses hell, paradise-on-earth and everywhere in between," and sporting a poly-styled score by Julian Wachner, was premiered at John Hancock Hall. Future projects include an interactive video-game opera, *PermaDeath* (scheduled for September 2018); *Monkey*, a "kung fu puppet parable" (September 2019); and *Cosmic Cowboy*, inspired by the robotic space probe Philae (September 2020).

"I want to create American opera that comes from my imagination," says Jacobs. "I'm not interested in writing libretti derived from a play, book, or movie, no matter how great. . . . Perhaps I will feel differently later in my development, but right now, there are just too many stories bursting out of me." —Richard S. Ginell



PETER JARVIS

Salesman, Reuning & Son Violins

Faculty member, New England Conservatory Prep

Peter Jarvis first joined Reuning & Son Violins in 1990 to pursue his interest in violin restoration as a hobby. After spending some years at the workbench, he began to apply his skills to customer assistance and instrument presentation. Bringing professional musicianship to what is now fulltime sales, he has been cited by *Art Times Journal* as being the “indispensable ‘ear’ for Reuning...,fluent in the specific vocabulary used to describe the characteristics of a violin, its color and the power of the sound, and the way it responds to fingers.”

A native of Canada, Jarvis has a BM degree from the University of Ottawa and a Master’s in Violin Performance from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. He began his career as a member of Museaus, one of Canada’s premier touring string quartets and served as principal second violin of the Lethbridge Symphony Orchestra and the Southern Alberta Chamber Orchestra. While living in Ithaca, New York, he was concertmaster of the Rochester Bach Festival Orchestra and assistant concertmaster of the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra.

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He now balances his career as a salesman with teaching at the New England Conservatory Preparatory School, where he is the director and conductor of the String Training Orchestras and String Chamber Orchestra and coaches chamber ensembles.

He is known for his enthusiasm, dedication, and patience in working with children, and in 2011 he was awarded the school's Jean Stackhouse Award for Excellence in Teaching.—Vivien Schweitzer



ALEX LAING

Principal Clarinet, Phoenix Symphony
Founder, The Leading Tone

Alex Laing, who calls himself a “citizen artist,” first picked up the clarinet as an 11-year-old kid in Silver Spring, Maryland, his hometown. Over time, he worked his way through Northwestern University, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Sweelinck Conservatorium Amsterdam, eventually landing the top clarinet

job in the Phoenix Symphony in 2002, which he still holds today. He also serves on the board of the Arizona School for the Arts and co-chairs the Institutional Readiness Task Force for the League of American Orchestras’ Diversity Forum. And he holds a certificate in nonprofit management from Arizona State University’s

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He has put all of that to good use by founding and directing The Leading Tone, a nonprofit after-school project in the Phoenix area. The name of the organization comes from the leading tone in the diatonic scale. With that metaphor in mind, Laing hopes to inspire kids to “develop skills to lead themselves.”

In 2015, The Leading Tone started what it calls “the first-ever REACH Bucket Band,” consisting of 36 first- and second-grade pupils at Phoenix’s Vista College Preparatory hammering

away on plastic buckets. REACH is an acronym for Respect, Enthusiasm, Achievement, Courage, and Hard work. In 2016, the organization added a recorder class and another on movement, using stepping as a way of getting kids to play rhythmically together.

This year, Laing was chosen by the Sphinx Organization as one of three emerging classical artists of color to receive the 2018 Sphinx Medal of Excellence. The distinction comes with a \$50,000 grant to advance his career development, which will be presented at a special Kennedy Center Sphinx luncheon on March 21.— Richard S. Ginell



TANIA LEÓN

Composer, Conductor

Founding Artistic Director, [Composers Now](#)

In a recent NBC News interview, Cuban-born composer and conductor Tania León discussed her approach to writing her latest opera, *The Little Rock Nine*. Commissioned by the University of Central Arkansas, the opera is based on the true story of nine African-American students who, in 1957, under federal troop escort, entered all-white Central High School to obtain an equal education.

“I come from a cradle where we were all united by poverty,” León told NBC. “We were multi-racial, multi-everything but what we had in common is that we were poor. So that kind of diversity is how I see the world and without diversity, there is no progress.” When asked about her antidote for dealing with racism, she responded: “I deal with it through my art and I talk directly to the public. When it comes time to talk about the person that has a heart and the person that has no heart, I choose to talk about the fact that both people have a mother.” The opera features a libretto by Thulani Davis and is scheduled to be

completed in 2018.

In addition to her own large catalog of chamber, orchestral, vocal, and solo piano works, and her opera *Scourge of Hyacinths* (1994), León champions the work of other living composers through Composers Now, an organization she launched in 2010.



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Its purpose is to help nurture and expose new work by organizing concerts in an eclectic range of venues. Earlier this year, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs proclaimed February 1 as Composers Now Festival Day, crediting the organization as “an important ally” in the city’s efforts to empower artists in its diverse cultural landscape.

Léon is a founding member of the Dance Theater of Harlem and an award-winning teacher. She holds honorary doctorate

degrees from Colgate University, Oberlin, and SUNY Purchase College, and has served as U.S. Artistic Ambassador of American Culture in Madrid, Spain. A professor at Brooklyn College since 1985 and at the Graduate Center of CUNY, she was named Distinguished Professor of the City University of New York in 2006. In 2010 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters.—Vivien Schweitzer



MARK LOWRY

Co-Founder, Editor, and Chief Theater Critic

Theater Jones

North Texas, which includes such cultural behemoths as Dallas and Fort Worth, no longer has fulltime staff music critics at its major metropolitan newspapers—a common conundrum in this day and age. What they do have, though, is *Theater Jones*, an e-zine that is trying to fill the gap that newspapers have left in this region.

No relation to the political magazine *Mother Jones*, *Theater Jones* gets its name from Margo Jones, who helped start the regional theater movement in Dallas in the 1940s. The e-zine covers classical music, opera, theater, dance, comedy, and media, with the stated goal of being as thorough in its coverage of the arts as the newspapers and TV are of sports (no mean goal in Texas) and politics.

A staff writer and theater critic with the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* from 1998 to 2008, Editor and Chief Theater Critic Mark

Lowry founded *Theater Jones* in early 2009, recognizing the need for arts coverage that has only grown more pressing since. Composer/writer Gregory Sullivan Isaacs is the chief classical music and opera critic, Margaret Putnam is the chief dance critic, and there is a roster of 25 contributing writers.

Theater Jones reviews both professional and semi-professional events, along with occasional performances by amateurs, on a case-by-case basis. Amid its numerous offerings of reviews, news, features, announcements, etc., there is also a crowd-funding page where Lowry and the staff notify readers about Kickstarter campaigns that various groups and creative folk have launched.—Richard S. Ginell

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QUINTON MORRIS

Associate Professor of Violin, Director of Chamber and Instrumental Music, [Seattle University](#)
Director, [Key to Change Studio](#)

Quinton Morris is quite the Renaissance man in his native city of Seattle. A graduate of the North Carolina School for the Arts and the Boston Conservatory, Morris is associate professor of violin and director of chamber and instrumental music at Seattle University, as well as an associate in the Global African Studies program. He designed the Bachelor of Music program after he arrived at SU in 2007, recruiting faculty and determining the curriculum.

A noted lecturer in arts entrepreneurship, both at APAP conferences in New York and TED Talks in Seattle, Morris is the founding director of the Young Eight String Octet, which performed for 11 years in urban centers and conservatories in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Austin, and other cities until it disbanded in 2012.

More recently, Morris launched Key to Change Studio, a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching middle- and high-school violin students in Seattle's South King County. Key to Change offers individual and group violin lessons, master classes, and a yearly workshop on preparing for college auditions.

"A lot of people of color and people of low-income backgrounds are being pushed south of Seattle," Morris told *Seattle Weekly* last year. "And unfortunately, there are not very many resources there that are arts-related. I have the opportunity now—I have been very blessed—to give something back."

As if all of this activity wasn't enough to keep him busy, Morris is the director/producer of *Breakthrough*, a film about Chevalier de Saint-Georges, the 18th-century violinist and first-known classical composer of African ancestry. Morris plays Saint-Georges in the film, which serves as the core of a larger program with which he toured five continents and 22 cities in 2015-16, playing some of Saint-Georges's compositions and talking about the man. He uses *Breakthrough* and Saint-Georges to show students that black artists and musicians have been part of the classical tradition throughout history, and to encourage them to pursue that tradition themselves, all the while developing a sense of self-discipline and, perhaps above all, accomplishment. —Richard S. Ginell

EUGENE ROGERS

Associate Director of Chorus, Associate Professor of Conducting
[University of Michigan](#)



Conductor, lecturer, and pedagogue Eugene Rogers is an advocate for new music and inclusion in the classical music world, a cause he champions as the first national chair of Diversity Issues for Chorus America. As associate director of choirs at the University of Michigan, Rogers teaches undergraduate conducting, leads the Men's Glee Club and the University Choir, and is the faculty

director of the MPulse Vocal Arts Institute, a national high school summer program.

"Repertoire that deals with issues of social justice is important to me, a part of my philosophy of teaching," Rogers told Chorus America about his 2016 performance with the U-M glee club of Joel Thompson's *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*. The libretto

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features the dying words of African-American men killed by the police. Such repertoire, according to Rogers, “engages our audience, builds a strong sense of community amongst our singers, and can foster musical *ubuntu* [an African term meaning ‘humanity.’]”

Rogers continues, “As Nelson Mandela defined the philosophy, *ubuntu* holds that our personal humanity is dependent on the humanity of others.” In 2011 Rogers traveled to Tanzania to study East African choral traditions and published editions of Tanzanian choral music under the Hal Leonard World Music Series. The Eugene Rogers Choral Series (available via Mark Foster

Publishing) features emerging composers who specialize in native folk traditions.

Rogers, who holds a BA in choral music education from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign and a PhD in choral conducting from U-M, has been a peer panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts. He currently serves on boards including the National Collegiate Choral Organization and is the ChoralQuest series editor for the American Composers Forum. His past appointments include assistant artistic director of the Boys Choir of Harlem and director of choral activities at Macalester College.—Vivien Schweitzer



ALEX ROSS

Music Critic, *The New Yorker*

Author, *The Rest Is Noise*, *Listen to This*

For more than 25 years Alex Ross has offered erudite music criticism and reportage, his observations written in elegant, witty prose and couched in a wider cultural context. Music critic at *The New Yorker* since 1996 and a freelance critic at the *New York Times* in the years preceding, he is the author of two books: *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (2007), an engrossing, widely acclaimed analysis of the era’s music, politics, and culture, and *Listen to This* (2010), a collection of essays about Mozart, Verdi, Radiohead, and Cecil Taylor, among others. He is currently working on his third book, *Wagnerism*, an account of Wagner’s influence on the arts from the late 19th century to the present.

On his popular blog, *The Rest Is Noise*, Ross offers playlists, articles, and trenchant observations, as he also does for his some 107,000 followers on Twitter. Ross, who grew up in Washington, DC, and studied composition at Harvard with Peter Lieberson, has been awarded a MacArthur Fellowship, three ASCAP Deems Taylor Awards, and a Holtzbrinck Fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin.

Two articles published in *The New Yorker* this fall highlight Ross’s engaging blend of cultural commentary and musical insight. From the October 16th issue: “The Metropolitan Opera opened the season with its hundred-and-fifty-seventh performance of Bellini’s ‘Norma.’ The New York Philharmonic began with its hundred-and-nineteenth rendition of Mahler’s Fifth Symphony. This is the safe course that many performing-arts groups are choosing in precarious times: the eternal return to the world that was.”

And from an August report about a Salzburg Festival concert featuring baritone Christian Gerhaher: “At the core of his art is an artlessness akin to conversational speech... In “Mädchen-Schwermut” (“A Girl’s Melancholy”), Gerhaher begins with a white, wan sound, evoking a lost spirit that finds only sadness in dewdrops and spring breezes. When he reaches the words ‘freudenlose Welt’ (‘joyless world’), a slight roughness intrudes, as if he had lost faith in the illusion of song.”—Vivien Schweitzer

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MARNA SELTZER
Director
[Princeton University Concerts](#)

Princeton University Concerts will mark its 125th anniversary next season, but the chamber music series has already started celebrating, with innovative new programs like PUC125: Performances Up Close. These call for the audience to sit in a circle surrounding musicians onstage—an arrangement designed to break down the perceived barriers of traditional concert settings.

“When you’re sitting in a concert hall and you’re staring up at a stage, you do feel a certain distance, like a psychological curtain between the performer and the audience,” says Marna Seltzer, PUC director since 2010. “We wanted to remove that and make people feel like they’re part of the process.”

To appeal to students, Up Close concerts run only an hour, and are at 6 p.m. and 9 p.m., perfect for a study break. For the first concert this season, by Norwegian Baroque ensemble Barokksolistene, a space in the new Lewis Center for the Arts was

turned into a 17th-century pub. Another of Seltzer’s new initiatives is the Creative Reactions Contest, which asks students to respond in writing to the experience of hearing live chamber music. Last season, more than 80 students entered the contest, and the two first-prize winners, both of whom wrote poems, were awarded \$500. The [poems were posted](#) on the PUC blog.

“The contest allows students to make an entirely personal connection to the concerts we present,” says Seltzer. “For our general audience, it gives them a glimpse into the thoughts of the next generation of concertgoers and music lovers.”

Not that Seltzer, who previously was artistic administrator of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and executive director of the University of Chicago Presents concert series, neglects traditional chamber music at Princeton. The 2017-18 season includes such popular artists as violinist Jennifer Koh, pianist Andras Schiff, tenor Lawrence Brownlee, cellist Truls Mørk, and the Artemis String Quartet. —John Fleming



YUVAL SHARON
Founder, Artistic Director
[The Industry](#)

When he founded an experimental production company called The Industry in Los Angeles in 2012, the Chicago-born director Yuval Sharon was intent upon shaking up the conventional wisdom of what opera is and where it can be performed. It didn’t take long.

Sharon started attracting attention in 2013 with a production of Christopher Cerrone’s *Invisible Cities*, which operagoers heard through wireless headphones in L.A.’s historic Union Station. His reputation grew in fall 2015 when coverage of *Hopscotch* went viral. This “mobile opera,” as he describes it, with a score by six

composers, called for patrons to ride in 24 limousines through the streets of L.A. witnessing performances in the limos and in scattered public places.

A 2017 MacArthur Genius Grant recipient, Sharon has been affectionately called a “disrupter-in-residence” by former Los Angeles Philharmonic President Deborah Borda, who signed him on as artist-collaborator with the orchestra in 2016. Last season, Sharon brought his iconoclastic bent to Walt Disney Concert Hall with his juxtapositions of Schubert and Samuel Beckett on a March

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21 program, and his staging of Lou Harrison’s *Young Caesar* on June 13 that actually made cogent sense of this problematic opera.

This season, after staging Janáček’s *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the Cleveland Orchestra in September, Sharon returned to L.A. November 12 with the world premiere of Annie Gosfield’s *War of the Worlds*, staged at Disney Hall and simulcast at the sites of three reactivated air raid sirens left over from World War II. Borda called it “a fascinating commentary on disinformation or alternative facts.” On April 5, 2018, Sharon will stage Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* with Gustavo Dudamel and the LA Phil.

Sharon is drawing attention worldwide as well. His *Vixen* went to Vienna in October as the first fully staged opera to take place in the Musikverein, and he will become the first American stage director to work at the Bayreuth Festival when his production of Wagner’s *Lohengrin* runs in summer 2018.

“He is highly musical, which you can’t say about every opera director,” Cleveland Orchestra Music Director Franz Welser-Möst told the *New York Times*. “He has a way of going right to the core, the essence of a piece, and not just putting an idea onto a piece.”—Richard S. Ginell



JOAN SQUIRES
President
Omaha Performing Arts

When Joan Squires came to Omaha in 2002, she was plowing new ground in Nebraska’s largest city. As president of Omaha Performing Arts, she was charged with developing the nonprofit organization founded two years earlier to bring in top-level performing artists and ensembles as well as support homegrown groups.

“Omaha Performing Arts has really had an opportunity to make a major impact in Omaha through the presentation of the finest performing arts for our community,” says Squires, president and CEO of the Phoenix Symphony for a decade before her move to Omaha. “There wasn’t a major presenter that does what we do. Now we’re able to bring in the kinds of performances that would not appear otherwise.”

Today, OPA has an operating budget of \$18 million and manages two venues in downtown Omaha. The \$102 million Holland Performing Arts Center, opened in 2005, presents an array of blues and jazz, classical music, and dance, country and pop music, and more. The Omaha Symphony plays in the center’s 2,000-seat concert hall. The Orpheum Theater, originally a vaudeville house that opened in 1927, has undergone \$20 million in renovations since 2002. It is home to the Broadway series and performances by Opera Omaha.



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Squires recently received the Samuel J. L’Hommedieu Award for Outstanding Achievement in Presenter Management from the Broadway League. The only Tony Award voter in Nebraska, she visits New York frequently, seeing up to 30 Broadway shows a year. The tour of *Hamilton* will be at the Orpheum in 2018-19.

OPA reports having a \$40 million annual economic impact in the Omaha area. During the past 10 years, 3 million people have attended its events, and Squires has been at many of them. “At the end of the day, standing in the back of the theater and watching the audience react, I think I have the best job in town.”
—John Fleming



NANCY UMANOFF

Executive Director

Mark Morris Dance Group

Behind every thriving arts organization is a dynamic administrator, and Nancy Umanoff has been a driving force behind the success of the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) for more than 30 years. Umanoff, a trusted collaborator of Morris and a woman described by *The Nation* as “intimidatingly efficient and down-to-earth,” was appointed managing director in 1986 and executive director in 2000. Her many achievements include spearheading the acquisition of a permanent home for the company in Brooklyn, the Mark Morris Dance Center, which celebrated its ten-year anniversary in 2012.

Umanoff is also helping nourish the next generation of arts managers: MMDG is participating in the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Management Fellowship, an initiative that launched in September 2017 to train a diverse group of young professionals.

Umanoff, a Brooklyn native with a BA in Dance from the State University of New York at Brockport and an MFA in Performing Arts Administration from Brooklyn College, has said that being a good

neighbor is important for the company. The Center has become a vital part of the local community, offering a wide range of activities including ballet, modern dance, hip-hop, and salsa classes to students of various ages and abilities, affordable rehearsal space, as well as teacher training and movement classes for people with Parkinson’s Disease. Umanoff’s other affiliations include the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance and the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership.

In an interview with the *Brooklyn Eagle* Umanoff described the “tremendous amount of trust” between her and Morris. “There are times when I know there is something that Mark may not be fully comfortable with or want to do, but he knows that if I ask, there’s a reason. . . . Mark makes up dances and I create an environment in which he can do that. Mark doesn’t try to do my job; I don’t try to do his. I’m not sure I could work for anyone else.” —Vivien Schweitzer



John Fleming writes for *Classical Voice North America*, *Opera News*, and other publications. For 22 years, he covered the Florida music scene as performing arts critic of the *Tampa Bay Times*.



Richard S. Ginell is a regular contributor to *The Los Angeles Times* and *American Record Guide*. His work has appeared in *Gramophone*, *Musical America*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *the Strad*, and others. He has written program notes for the Metropolitan Opera and others arts groups.



Vivien Schweitzer is a New York-based writer and pianist whose first book, *A Mad Love: An Introduction to Opera*, will be published by Basic Books in 2018. She was a freelance music critic and feature writer for the *New York Times* from 2006-16.

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