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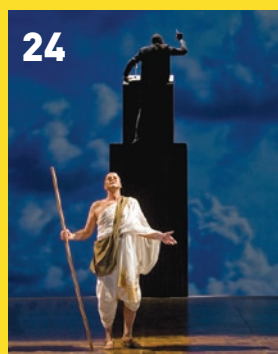
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Clockwise from top: The *auto-da-fé* scene from *Don Carlo*; bass Morris Robinson, shown in last season's *Rigoletto*, returns in two roles this fall; the life of Gandhi was the inspiration for *Satyagraha*.

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Opera Camp Expands in Scope and Size

The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion has seen many glamorous crowds over the years, but it may be at its most beautiful when it's filled with youngsters. This was the case recently when LA Opera had the honor of hosting dozens of students, ages 9 through 17, eagerly participating in its annual Opera Camp.

Opera Camp is an enormously popular summer program that inspires kids with the magical combination of music and storytelling. The participants come together to learn, rehearse and perform an opera in a fun-filled but intensive learning experience that leads to close friendships. The impact it has on their lives often takes them by surprise. The parents of one girl who participated in this year's Opera Camp marveled that "for all the activities that she has been involved in, from dance to choir to various sports, I have never seen her happier doing something."

For this year's Opera Camp, the youngsters prepared two operas, which they performed as a double bill for approximately 800 family members and friends in the Eva and Marc Stern Grand Hall. The operas were *The Prospector* (pictured on this page), a retelling of Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West* by Lee Holdridge and Richard Sparks, and *The White Bird of Poston* (pictured on page 10) by Eli Villanueva and Leslie Stevens, an opera set in a Japanese-American internment camp during World War II.

The pace is often dizzying. For *The White Bird of Poston*, the first thing they learned was the opening scene, which features a riot in the internment camp. The campers learned the music in the morning and by the end of the first day, they were

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ALL PHOTOS BY TASO PAPADAKIS



Inspired by *The Girl of the Golden West*, *The Prospector* depicts a Gold Rush prospector beset by coyotes. He distracts them with the tale of Minnie, Sheriff Rance and the outlaw Ramerrez.

Welcome to LA Opera



Dear friends,

I have long considered *Don Carlo* to be one of Verdi's greatest achievements. Earlier in my career, I had the honor of performing the leading tenor role opposite a number of distinguished baritones as Rodrigo. Verdi's deep admiration for the freedom-loving Rodrigo shines through in his beautiful music. It is a thrill for me now to take on this fascinating role myself.

Rodrigo is my sixth Verdi role in Los Angeles under the baton of James Conlon, our extraordinary music director. He has shaped the magnificent musicians of the LA Opera Orchestra into a truly world-class ensemble and it is always a special joy to collaborate with him.

Stage director Louisa Muller, who makes her company debut, has the honor of working with a wonderful cast of singers. One of the world's leading tenors, Ramón Vargas, last appeared with the company in 1999, and I am delighted to welcome him back to our stage in the title role. Ferruccio Furlanetto made his company debut in 2006 as King Philip II, a role he reprises this season for two performances. Two stars of last season's *Carmen* return: Ana María Martínez is Elisabeth de Valois—her seventh leading role in Los Angeles—and Alexander Vinogradov sings four performances of King Philip. Morris Robinson returns as the Grand Inquisitor and Solomon

Howard returns as the Friar. I am also pleased to introduce Anna Smirnova, who makes her company debut as Princess Eboli.

I am grateful to The Blue Ribbon for their generous underwriting support for this production, and to Aubrey and Joyce Chernick for their special support of *Don Carlo*. I am truly honored that two of LA Opera's most generous supporters, Eva Stern and board chairman Marc Stern, my dear friends, have so graciously underwritten my appearance in *Don Carlo* through The Eva and Marc Stern Principal Artists Fund.

We were so pleased to present *Don Carlo* as this season's free annual simulcast at the Santa Monica Pier and at Sylmar's El Cariso Park, with gratitude to Los Angeles County and Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. I am also delighted that, thanks to the support of Michael and Jane Eisner and The Eisner Foundation, we will be producing a DVD of *Don Carlo* with special commentary by James Conlon.

More than any other art form, opera can move hearts and bring people together. At LA Opera, we are driven by the conviction that opera has the power to change lives. Few works exemplify this more than *Satyagraha* by Philip Glass, a meditation on the life of Gandhi. This presentation of *Satyagraha* marks LA Opera's completion of the Glass "portrait trilogy" of operas about powerful thinkers who changed the world, an initiative launched in 2013 with *Einstein on the Beach*. Resident Conductor Grant Gershon conducts a spectacular production directed by Phelim McDermott, who made a notable 2016 company debut staging the third chapter of the trilogy, *Akhnaten*.

Tenor Sean Panikkar makes his LA Opera debut as Gandhi. Our cast also includes J'Nai Bridges as Kasturbai, Morris Robinson as Parsi Rustomji and Patrick Blackwell as Krishna. Two alumni of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program return in prominent roles: So Young Park as Miss Schlesen and Theo Hoffman as Mr. Kallenbach. The cast also includes three current members of the program making their company debuts in important roles: Erica Petrocelli as Mrs. Naidoo, Niru Liu as Mrs. Alexander and Michael J. Hawk as Prince Arjuna.

LA Opera's commitment to staging major productions of contemporary works like *Satyagraha* would simply not be possible without the dedicated support of some of our dearest friends. I am grateful to Ceil and Michael Pulitzer for their generous underwriting support. I would also like to thank the Piera Shaheen Emerging Artist Program for underwriting the appearance of Sean Panikkar on our stage.

Sincerely,

PLÁCIDO DOMINGO
ELI AND EDYTHE BROAD GENERAL DIRECTOR

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up on their feet staging the scene.

Thanks to the generosity of some very special donors, this year's Opera Camp was bigger than ever. An anonymous donor provided a contribution specifically to encourage the expansion of Opera Camp; the Opera League of Los Angeles dedicated the proceeds from its annual fundraiser to the program for the fourth year in a row; and a special grant from the California State Libraries, Civic Liberties program supported this summer's presentation of *The White Bird of Poston* (pictured on this page). This support made it possible to expand enrollment from 50 to 73, to extend the length of the program from two weeks to three, and to offer scholarships to 40% of the participants, who could not otherwise afford to attend.

Both participants and their families are frequently transformed by the experience. One parent wrote that their son "made several valuable and influential friendships with talented kids that share his same interest. A seed of hope has been planted and with the right nurturing, I do believe we may see [his] hopes, passions and dreams once again flourish in the art."

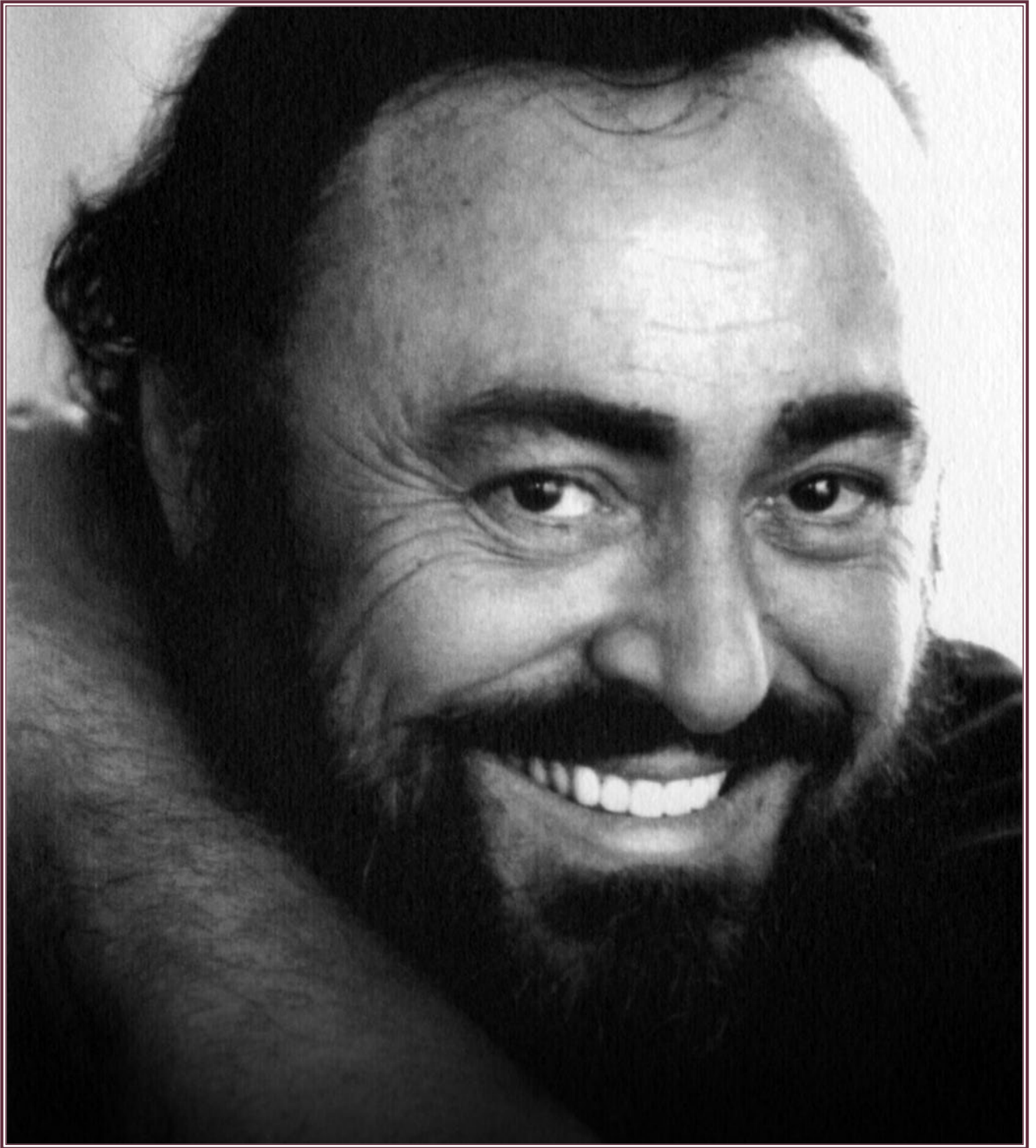
Find out how your kids can take part in the company's diverse range of educational programs and performance opportunities by visiting LAOpera.org.



ALL PHOTOS BY TASO PAPADAKIS



The White of Poston relates a dark chapter in U.S. history, when Japanese-Americans were forcibly relocated to detention camps. Fleeing the camp, young Akiko gets lost in the desert but is saved when a bird leads her to water. She meets a Mojave boy and a coyote, an encounter that changes all of them.



OCTOBER 12, 1935 ✎ SEPTEMBER 6, 2007

*LA Opera's productions from the Italian repertoire are
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Luciano Pavarotti
and in honor of his remarkable contributions to the world of opera.

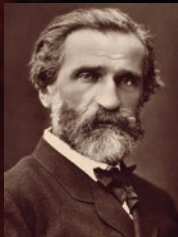
VERDI'S *DON CARLO* A ROYAL TRAGEDY

BY MARY JANE PHILLIPS

Among Giuseppe Verdi's operas, fewer are grander than *Don Carlo*, a drama sets in the 1500s at the court of Philip II of Spain. This work depicts the conflict between the king and his son and brings into full view the horrors of the Inquisition. *Don Carlo* was a heroic achievement for Verdi, one that proved his genius beyond all doubt.

The Creation of *Don Carlo*

In the summer of 1865 the Paris Opéra offered Verdi a commission for a new opera. At that moment he was 51 and had created a "new" life for himself as a wealthy gentleman farmer. Secure on his country estate, he often said that his



Giuseppe Verdi

career was over and that he would never write another opera. Nevertheless, he was tempted by the offer from Paris, and after considering several subjects, he looked to Friedrich Schiller's

Don Carlos, a historical drama, as the source for his plot. The opera, however, is not "all Schiller," for Verdi brought to the project his broad knowledge of Italian literature and the memories of his own experience in national politics.

This was not the first time he had considered this subject, for it had been proposed to him some 15 years earlier, but then he was not interested. Instead he wrote such masterpieces as *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *La Forza del Destino*.

Finally, though, he was ready to face *Don Carlo*; and with a libretto in hand he began bringing its historical figures to life. Of course, he saw them as he had always seen characters in his operas: as human beings with emotions that any audience could understand. Indeed, human emotions are the engines fueling everything Verdi wrote, from the start of his career in
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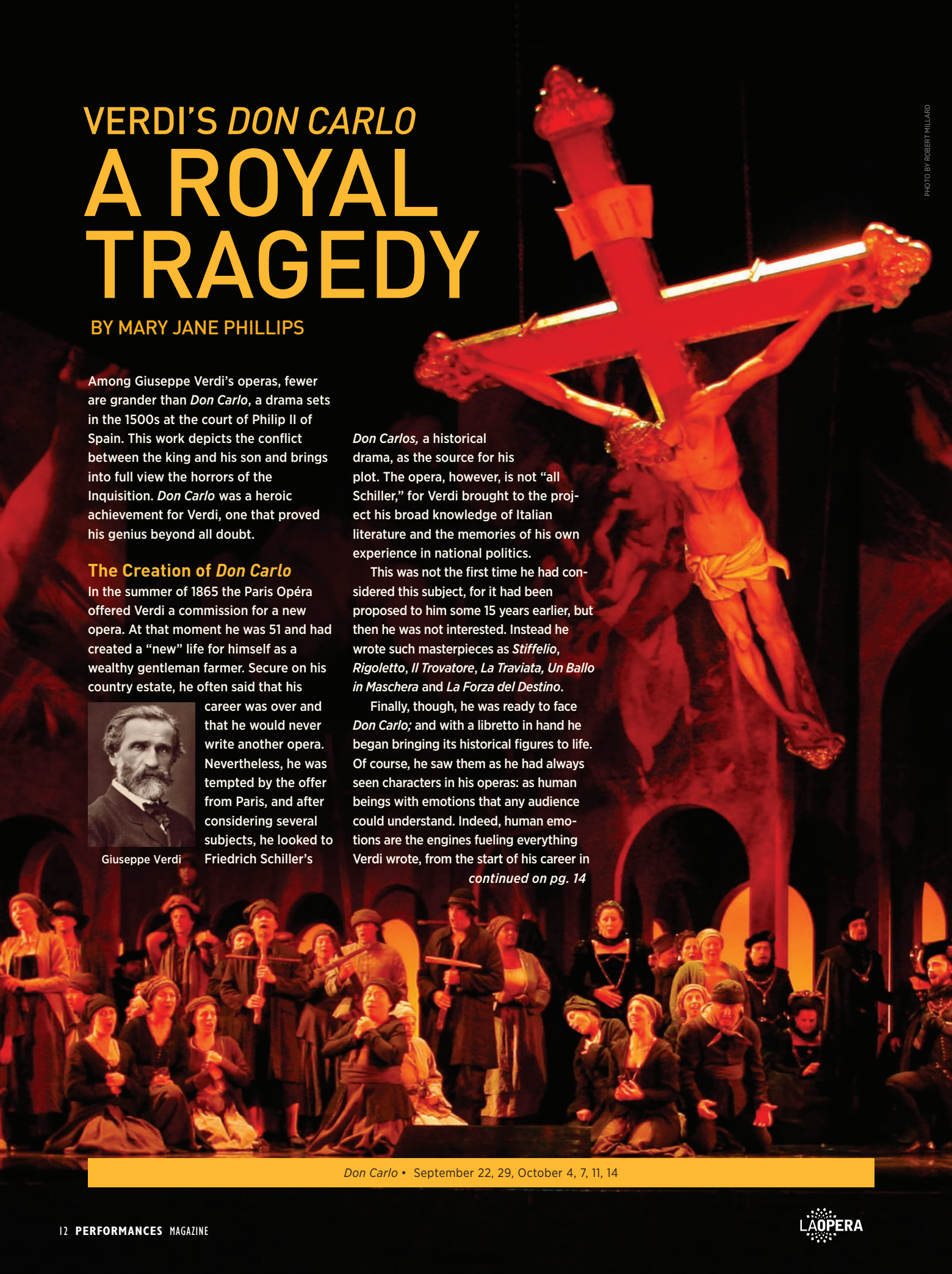


PHOTO BY ROBERT MILLARD

Don Carlo • September 22, 29, October 4, 7, 11, 14



The principal characters of Verdi's *Don Carlo* are fictionalized versions of historical figures. Left to right: Carlos, Prince of Asturias (portrait by Sofonisba Anguissola); Philip II of Spain (artist unknown); Elisabeth of Valois (portrait by Juan Pantoja de la Cruz).

1839 until the 1890s, and nowhere does he have greater command over the representation of emotions than in *Don Carlo*.

The Historical Background of the Story

The history behind *Don Carlo* is fully documented, and it is riveting. Philip ruled Spain, Burgundy, and the Habsburg Empire's lands in Italy and the New World, all of which he had received from the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, his father. Philip's son, Carlo, is the protagonist of Verdi's opera. Philip suspected Carlo and even feared him because he felt he was unstable and possibly dangerous. Because of these concerns Philip had Carlo committed to house arrest in 1567, a move that shocked other European rulers. When both Carlo and Queen Elisabeth died, one soon after the other, legends arose depicting Philip as a consummate villain, the man who ordered the murder of his son and wife because he believed them to be lovers.

The six main characters in *Don Carlo* are loosely based on historical figures of Philip's reign; and Verdi used them to build a tragedy packed with energy and conflict. Philip dominates the opera. Carlo is the flawed young hero. His young stepmother Elisabeth is the woman he loves. Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa, is Don Carlo's trusted friend and the king's only confidant. The all-powerful Grand Inquisitor of Spain is a formidable,

old, blind priest; and Princess Eboli is the queen's scheming lady-in-waiting.

Another character, one appearing only briefly, is called "A Friar," *un Frate*, in the libretto, but he is actually the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Before the action of the opera starts, Charles had abdicated, handed part of his territory to Philip, and entered a monastery where he lived as a simple friar. However, in the last act of *Don Carlo* he appears spectrally, not as the Friar but as the ghost of Charles V, wearing the imperial crown and robes; and he saves Carlo from certain death at the hands of the Inquisition.

In dealing with Philip and his court, Verdi could actually look back on his own travels in Spain, where, shortly before beginning *Don Carlo*, he had taken a guided tour through Philip's palace, the Escorial. After that visit he wrote to a friend, saying: "I do not like the Escorial (forgive me the blasphemy). It is a pile of marble...severe, terrible, like the fierce sovereign who built it."

The Family Portraits

In Philip's era he was depicted as "the Catholic king," obsessed with driving heresy from his lands, and something of that strength of mind is revealed in portraits of him. The most important of the king's court painters was Titian, who painted both Charles V and Philip. Titian was then

followed by Sofonisba Anguissola, a pupil and friend of Michelangelo and an important woman artist of the Renaissance. Philip named her the "official portraitist" at his court and Elisabeth's lady-in-waiting.

Art historian Ilya Perlingieri, the author of an important book on Anguissola, writes that Philip invited the artist to come to Spain because he worried that Elisabeth, a teenager, would be lonely and sad in a strange land. Once there, Anguissola found a troubling situation because the young queen was indeed at "a court noted for its somberness and tedium," a place ruled by Philip, who was "taciturn and withdrawn."

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**Tenor
Ramón Vargas
on *Don Carlo***

*I think that
Otello, Simon
Boccanegra and
Don Carlo are the
"masters" of the*

masterpieces of Verdi. My role, Don Carlo, has so much wonderful music to sing, especially his first duet with the soprano, the duet with the baritone, of course, and the final duet. Verdi composed so much great music in his long life, but this is some of the most beautiful music that he ever wrote.

The Eva and Marc Stern Principal Artists Fund

Each year, The Eva and Marc Stern Principal Artists Fund provides generous underwriting to present two of the opera world's most extraordinary artists on the LA Opera stage. LA Opera is honored that the Sterns have selected to underwrite LA Opera's own Plácido Domingo in his performance as Rodrigo in this production of *Don Carlo*. Later this season, The Eva and Marc Stern Principal Artists Fund will generously support Susan Graham's appearance in *Hansel and Gretel*.

The Sterns have been involved in nearly every aspect of LA Opera over many years, championing more than 15 ambitious projects including the *Ring* cycle, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Il Trittico*, *Gianni Schicchi/Pagliacci* and the DVD releases of *La Traviata* and *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Last season, through their Principal Artists Fund, they supported the performance of Plácido Domingo in *Nabucco* and Audra McDonald in concert. Chairman of the board since 2002, Mr. Stern has been the driving force in bringing so many of the world's most influential artists to Los Angeles, including Renée Fleming in the 2014 presentation of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In recognition of their extraordinary long-time involvement and support of LA Opera and The Music Center, the Eva and Marc Stern Grand Hall in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion was named in their honor in 2010.

Marc Stern is chairman of The TCW Group, Inc., a Los Angeles-based asset management firm. He was elected to LA Opera's board of directors in 1992, and is involved in numerous philanthropic activities, including serving as chairman of LA Opera, the Mayor's Fund of Los Angeles and the President's Council of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He is also a board member of the Metropolitan Opera, California Institute of Technology, Performing Arts Center of Los



Angeles County, the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Committee, PBS SoCal and the Alliance for Southern California Innovation. Mr. Stern was formerly vice chair of the Salk Institute and a board member of the Kennedy Center. He is a minority owner of both the Milwaukee Brewers and the Milwaukee Bucks.

Eva Stern is a clinical social worker and philanthropist, supporting Southern California youth through the combination of education and the arts. A board member of the Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, in 2006 she led the effort to establish the Marc and Eva Stern Math and Science School, an Alliance public charter high school. Inspired by her work with the high school, she established AMP, a special mentoring program for first-year college students. She also serves on the President's Council at California State University, Los Angeles, on the board of The Blue Ribbon, and is a past chair of InsideOUT Writers, a creative writing program for youth in juvenile hall.

With deepest gratitude, LA Opera acknowledges Mr. and Mrs. Stern for decades of committed leadership and for the extraordinary generosity that will provide ongoing support for the world's greatest artists on the LA Opera stage.

DON CARLO continued from pg. 14

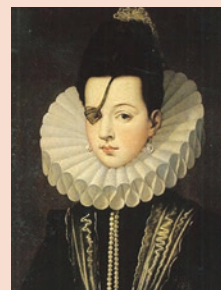
Perlingieri says Philip's existence was actually brightened by the arrival of Elisabeth, whom he loved very much. While Anguissola lived at court she received a stipend that was paid in gold, jewels and fine cloth; and as she taught the queen to draw, she became one of her close companions.

Using another mode of portraiture, Verdi "painted" these same royal figures from a purely theatrical point of view. Elisabeth is warm, generous, and sympathetic, while Princess Eboli is dishonest and manipulative. Carlo is driven nearly mad by love for Elisabeth but is indeed heroic when he agrees to save Flanders from Spanish domination; and Posa and Carlo are passionate about freedom, the thing Philip most fears. The Grand Inquisitor lives only to protect Spain and the Catholic Church from heresy and defend absolutism. Philip in Verdi's hands becomes wholly and fully human, a powerful, weary, disillusioned monarch who is troubled by doubt and is frustrated because (as the libretto of the opera says) he cannot "read what is in

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Princess Eboli: Fact vs Fiction

In the opera: The eyepatch-wearing beauty, King Philip's secret mistress, mistakenly believes that Don Carlo loves her. When she learns that Carlo loves Elisabeth,



she vows to destroy them. Later, filled with remorse, she helps rescue Carlo from prison.

In history: Ana de Mendoza, Princess of Eboli (1540-1592) was the wife of King Philip's chief counselor. She lost one eye in her early teens, perhaps in a fencing accident. Proud, intelligent, passionate and lively, she was close friends with Elisabeth and is believed to have been Philip's mistress for a time. After her husband's death, she began a relationship with the king's secretary, a married statesman involved in a politically motivated murder. Accused of betraying state secrets, she lived under house arrest for the last 11 years of her life.

THE Blue Ribbon

LA Opera expresses gratitude to all the members of The Blue Ribbon for their generous support of *Don Carlo*. The Blue Ribbon has helped provide valuable support to LA Opera from its earliest days and to young people throughout the Los Angeles area through their support of the company's community and education programs. In recent years, they have provided production underwriting support for *The Pearl Fishers* (2017), *Macbeth* (2016), *Madame Butterfly* (2016), *The Ghosts of Versailles* (2015), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (2014) and *Thaïs* (2014), as well as special support for *A Streetcar Named Desire*

(2014). Over the past 17 seasons, The Blue Ribbon has contributed approximately \$4.4 million to LA Opera, an impressive legacy of devoted generosity.

The Blue Ribbon was founded in 1968 by Dorothy Buffum Chandler, who mobilized a dedicated group of women leaders to sustain and support The Music Center and its resident companies. The Blue Ribbon has since raised more than \$76 million to promote and nurture the performing arts and arts education in Los Angeles. Its committed membership of approximately 450 members is led by Jill Baldauf, president and Julie Goldsmith, chairman.

Since 1970, the annual Blue Ribbon Children's Festival has welcomed more than 860,000 fifth graders to The Music Center, where many of the participants experience live performance for the first time. This three-day event of performances and arts activities is one of the longest ongoing free arts education programs in California.

"The Blue Ribbon has been a strong supporter for so many years, as a part of The Music Center and LA Opera family," said Plácido Domingo. "Music and arts education is a cause that is dear to my heart, so I especially want to thank these wonderful ladies for their inspiring work with children."

Joyce and Aubrey Chernick

LA Opera is indebted to Joyce and Aubrey Chernick for their special support of *Don Carlo*, which has helped to return this iconic LA Opera production to the stage. They have been supporters and patrons of LA Opera for more than two decades, and have cultivated a deep knowledge and love of the art form. A lifelong resident, dedicated to the arts in Los Angeles, Mrs. Chernick joined the LA Opera board of directors in 2009. The Chernicks have been special underwriters for the 2014 opening night production of *La Traviata* and the revival of LA Opera's renowned double bill of *Gianni Schicchi* and *Pagliacci* in 2015. They have also generously contributed to opening night galas for many years. Together, they are enthusiastic philanthropists, helping to make Los Angeles a vibrant and thriving community and helping those in need everywhere.

Joyce Chernick is a supporter of numerous other music and arts organizations in Los Angeles, including the Heidi Duckler Dance Theater, LACMA and the international youth orchestra iPalpiti. She is also a longtime member of The Blue Ribbon, the premier women's support organization of The Music Center.

Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Candle Corp., Aubrey Chernick has shared his company's success by forming the Candle Foundation, which supports a variety of charities dedicated to community investment, education, hunger and homelessness, preventive healthcare and medical research. He is also the founder of the Security Token Academy, which covers the evolving security token industry as a new form of financing startups and tokenizing existing assets.

The Chernicks' support for LA Opera is a testament to their commitment to



Joyce and Aubrey Chernick

the arts and to elevating Los Angeles as one of the world's premier cultural destinations for opera. LA Opera extends its gratitude to the Chernicks for their more than two decades of enthusiastic involvement and for their underwriting support of *Don Carlo*.

Preparing Tomorrow's Opera Stars

Now in its 12th season, LA Opera's Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program has fast emerged as one of the country's premiere programs for rising opera stars. Graduates have gone on to sing at virtually every top-tier opera house around the globe, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, La Scala and more.

The Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program provides the necessary resources to cultivate singers to their top form. Tenor Joshua Guerrero's career skyrocketed following his three seasons with the program. "LA Opera has been so influential in my career and is the house that I keep going back to," he says, having returned in the leading roles of Greenhorn in *Moby-Dick* and Macduff in *Macbeth*. Though he admits he wasn't yet a "finished product" when he first arrived in 2012, he commends the company for investing in singers who possess natural

talent. "The singers they accept aren't necessarily a polished piece that's ready to go out into the world. It's raw talent that they're willing to put the work into and to refine."

Many other alumni of the program—such as Angel Blue, So Young Park, Janai Brugger and Ben Bliss—have found similar success in the top opera houses across the United States, Europe and elsewhere.

Individualized courses for the young artists include musical coaching, voice lessons, language studies, and acting and dance training, not to mention meetings and auditions with agents and casting directors from all over the world. In addition, they're given invaluable performance opportunities and the chance to work closely with Plácido Domingo, James Conlon and Susan Graham, now in her second season as Artistic Advisor to the program.

Over the last decade, the program has evolved into a truly transformative

experience for young singers, providing them with the best possible springboard for careers in opera. As we enter a brand-new season, welcoming a brand-new group of artists (see page 22), we hope to shape them into the international superstars of tomorrow.

LA Opera's commitment to developing the next generation of artists on the world's stages is mirrored by the commitment of some very generous donors who are dedicated to the future of opera in Los Angeles and around the world. Originally created with funding from the Flora L. Thornton Foundation, the program now receives multi-year underwriting support from the Colburn Foundation and from Eugene and Marilyn Stein. Special support for young artist stipends is graciously provided by the Lenore and Richard Wayne Young Artist Fellowship. The extraordinary devotion of these donors has empowered LA Opera to continue its commitment to the training of our past, current and future young artists.

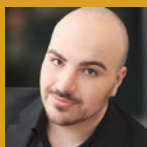
Where Are They Now? Catching up with some of the young artist alumni



Conductor **Kazem Abdullah** (young artist: 2006-07) made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2009 with *Orfeo ed Euridice*. He recently conducted the U.S. premiere of Wuorinen's *Brokeback Mountain* with New York City Opera.



Tenor **Migran Agadzhanian** (young artist: 2015-16) was the second-place winner of Operalia 2018. He sings leading roles with the Mariinsky Theater in Saint Petersburg. This season he performs in Geneva and Lyon.



Bass **Matthew Anchel** (young artist: 2010-11) is an ensemble member of the Stuttgart Opera, where his roles this season include Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville*, Benoit in *La Bohème* and Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*.



Tenor **Jesús León** (young artist: 2006-07) recently performed Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Florida Grand Opera, Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* with Opéra de Nice and Arturo in *I Puritani* in Florence.



Mezzo-soprano **Cassandra Zoé Velasco** (young artist: 2013-14) has appeared in recent productions of *Iolanta*, *Rusalka* and *The Merry Widow* with the Metropolitan Opera, where she will return this season in *Suor Angelica*.



Soprano **Karen Vuong** (young artist: 2006-08) is an ensemble member at the Frankfurt Opera, where her roles include the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* and the title role of *Rusalka*.

Meet the 2018/19 Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artists

Five new singers—chosen from 650 applicants, 200 live auditions and, ultimately, 28 final candidates—have joined the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program, along with four singers returning from last season. Also new to the program this season are conductor/pianist Louis Lohraseb and pianist Brendon Shapiro, selected through special auditions for James Conlon and LA Opera's music staff.

Baritone **Michael J. Hawk** was a 2017 Studio Artist at Wolf Trap Opera. He was a 2018 Apprentice Singer at Santa Fe Opera, where he covered the leading role of J. Robert Oppenheimer in John Adams' *Doctor Atomic*.

Mexican baritone **Juan Carlos Heredia**, a 2016 Operalia winner returning for his second season, appeared with the company last season as Moralès in *Carmen* and Marullo in *Rigoletto*. In July, he performed Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* with the Aspen Music Festival.

Chinese mezzo-soprano **Niru Liu**, who makes her company debut as Mrs. Alexander in *Satyagraha*, studied at the Manhattan School of Music and the New

England Conservatory. In July, she was a soloist at the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, in a concert conducted by Valery Gergiev.

Conductor and pianist **Louis Lohraseb** was the assistant conductor for LA Opera's *Nabucco* last season. He has been an assistant conductor for the Rome Opera, the Glimmerglass Festival and the Ravinia Festival, among others.

Soprano **Erica Petrocelli** recently earned her Artist Diploma from the New England Conservatory. A national semifinalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, she was a 2018 Apprentice Singer with the Santa Fe Opera.

Mezzo-soprano **Taylor Raven** returns for her second season with LA Opera, where she debuted as Vanderdendur in *Candide*. Over the summer, she performed Gertrude in *Roméo et Juliette* and Bernstein's *Songfest* with Wolf Trap Opera.

Soprano **Liv Redpath** returns for a third season with the company, where her many roles include Gretel in this season's *Hansel and Gretel*. Over the summer, she performed the leading role

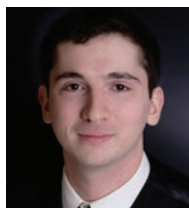
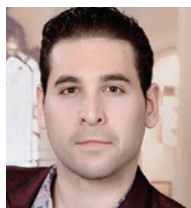
of Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Santa Fe Opera.

Tenor **Jose Simerilla Romero**, a native of Buenos Aires, most recently performed the roles of Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at the Vienna Summer Music Festival and Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* at the Berlin Opera Academy.

Pianist **Brendon Shapiro** will join Boston Lyric Opera next year as an Emerging Artist pianist and coach for *The Rape of Lucretia*. He has worked with San Diego's Opera NEO, Opera North, Boston Opera Collaborative and Opera Fayetteville.

Soprano **Sarah Vautour** performed the title role in *Maria Stuarda* and Morgana in *Alcina* with CCM Opera d'arte and appeared in Stephen Stucky's *The Classical Style* at the Aspen Music Festival. She was a 2018 Apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera.

Tenor **Joshua Wheeler**, who returns for his third season with the company, has appeared here in roles including Malcolm in *Macbeth* and Cacambo in *Candide*. He has performed with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Aspen Music Festival, Kentucky Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera and Dayton Opera.



The 2018/19 members of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program. Top row: baritone Michael J. Hawk, baritone Juan Carlos Heredia, mezzo-soprano Niru Liu, conductor/pianist Louis Lohraseb, soprano Erica Petrocelli, mezzo-soprano Taylor Raven, Bottom row: soprano Liv Redpath, tenor Jose Simerilla Romero, pianist Brendon Shapiro, soprano Sarah Vautour, tenor Joshua Wheeler.

SATYAGRAHA: TRANSFORMING GANDHI'S TRUTH-FORCE INTO OPERA

BY THOMAS MAY

The music world feted Philip Glass throughout the season of his milestone birthday—he turned 80 in 2017—and this December brings another cultural seal of approval when he joins the pantheon of Kennedy Center Award honorees (alongside Cher!). Yet the composer had only barely begun to find acceptance within the mainstream classical music sphere when he turned his attention to *Satyagraha* in 1978.

The work was commissioned for Dutch National Opera by the city of Rotterdam, where it premiered in 1980. Over the following decade, *Satyagraha* popped up in several cities in the U.S.—the California premiere came in 1989, at San Francisco Opera—but it had to wait until 2008 to appear on the Metropolitan Opera stage, in the production by Phelim McDermott, Julian Crouch, and colleagues that has now made its way to LA Opera.

The *Satyagraha* commission liberated Glass, at the age of 41, from the series of side jobs the composer had relied on for about two decades to support himself

financially (including his now-legendary stint as a New York City cab driver). Indeed, it marked a decisive turning point on several levels. *Satyagraha* was



Philip Glass

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PHOTO BY KEN HOWARD / METROPOLITAN OPERA

Satyagraha • October 20, 27, November 1, 4, 8, 11

Glass's first opera conceived for and premiered by conventionally operatic forces (trained, unamplified solo singers, chorus and orchestra). According to his memoir *Words Without Music*, this approach prompted a response of "tremendous disappointment" for critics who were expecting a continuation of the style of music he had developed for *Einstein on the Beach*: "I was looking for a way of radicalizing the music again, and sometimes that can mean doing something that people already know."

The composer had founded the Philip Glass Ensemble in 1968 to get his music performed, which happened in downtown New York venues decidedly outside the confines of the new music establishment. The PGE served as the fundamental model for his sound world over the next decade, until *Satyagraha* gave Glass an opportunity to write his first full score since his student and immediate post-graduate years. It thus set him on the path to an astonishingly prolific career employing the instrumental and vocal



PHOTO BY KEN HOWARD / METROPOLITAN OPERA

Returning to South Africa from India, Gandhi is met by a restless crowd that becomes violent.

proposed it while brainstorming ideas for his first collaboration with the director and designer Robert Wilson. They compromised on another figure from modern history who has acquired mythic reso-

"truth/the real/the good" with "force/insistence." Too rich in connotation to be easily translated, *satyagraha* is the term Gandhi applied to his movement of nonviolent resistance to injustice, of making change happen through the power of this "truth-force." Glass decided to restrict the opera's focus to the early years of Gandhi's career in South Africa, where he went as a young lawyer in 1893 and first put his methods of *satyagraha* to the test on behalf of the growing community of Indian immigrants. Gandhi spent 21 years in South Africa, until 1914, developing his identity as a civil rights activist. Why this early period? Glass explains that he wanted to portray Gandhi "when his ideas were new, when he was finding his own way" through creative (not passive!) gestures of political resistance.

Yet *Satyagraha* presents not so much a depiction of young Gandhi finding his identity as a meditation on the power of these principles and on the sense of being connected to something greater, as director Phelim McDermott points out. "That's the real meaning of the truth-force, the love-force: through this connection, I'm willing to give up my own sense of individual identity and not get hooked into the violence."

The opera's rejection of a conventionally Western narrative structure—a structure

continued on pg. 73

The opera's title comes from a portmanteau word combining the concepts of "truth/the real/the good" with "force/insistence."

forces associated with the classical music tradition—not only in operas, but in such recognized concert hall genres as symphonies and concertos.

Also of great significance for Glass—and reaffirming the essential theme of *Satyagraha* itself—is the fact that it was here, as well as in a film score he worked on around the same time (*Koyaanisqatsi*, the first of his collaborations with the filmmaker Godfrey Reggio), that the composer for the first time found a way "to express, in musical terms, ideas that belonged to the world of social change." With *Satyagraha*, he writes, came "the moment of authentication ... I knew why I was writing it, I knew what it meant, and I knew why it was important." In fact, the topic of M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948) had come up several years before, when Glass

nance, achieving a fluke success with *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976.

Glass had become a frequent traveler to India after collaborating with Ravi Shankar in 1965 during his years of study in Paris, where he was enlisted to help the master sitar player transcribe his music for a soundtrack project. This encounter with Indian music was one of the transformative experiences that guided Glass toward the development of his signature style of subtly repetitive structures (aka "Minimalism," a label the composer has always found inadequate). During his regular visits to India, Glass absorbed impressions that would inform his understanding of Gandhi and provide inspiration for the theatrical shaping of *Satyagraha*.

The opera's title comes from a portmanteau word combining the concepts of

Ceil and Michael E. Pulitzer

LA Opera has a longstanding history and renewed commitment to expanding the mainstage repertoire with contemporary work, which has brought to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion some of our most memorable productions and thousands of new audience members. It is through the generous underwriting support of Ceil and Michael Pulitzer and their dedication to contemporary opera that the company is now presenting this company premiere of *Satyagraha*. The Pulitzers have helped to bring contemporary opera and new productions to the LA Opera stage since 2003, when they moved from their longtime home in St. Louis to Santa Barbara and began attending LA Opera. Since then they have graciously helped to underwrite productions of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2004), *Grendel* (2006), *Porgy and Bess* (2007), the *Ring* cycle (2010), *The Turn of the Screw* (2011), *Einstein on the Beach* (2013),

Akhmat (2016) and *Orpheus and Eurydice* (2018). They have also generously supported the company's 20th, 25th, and now 30th Anniversary Angels leadership giving groups.

The Pulitzers' involvement with LA Opera is an extension of their great commitment to the arts and culture and to Mrs. Pulitzer's longtime passion for opera. She first fell in love with opera as a student at Sacred Heart School in Manhattan. The school had a box at the old Metropolitan Opera House and she would attend with her friends as often as possible. Mrs. Pulitzer's love for opera has only grown stronger over the years. In 2012, she was elected an honorary member of the LA Opera board of directors. She is an artist who attended the Art Students League, New York University, the School of Social Research and the University of Michigan. She is a trustee of The UCSB Foundation



and a member of the world fellowship of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award International Association and the national council of the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, as well as a past member of the MOCA board of trustees.

Michael Pulitzer is a retired newspaper executive and former chairman of Pulitzer, Inc. His distinguished career at Pulitzer spanned 45 years, beginning in 1960 as a reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and ending with his retirement as chairman in 2005. He retired from the board of Hearst-Argyle Television, Inc., in 2007.

LA Opera gratefully thanks Ceil and Michael Pulitzer for their extraordinary generosity and dedication to LA Opera.



Piera Barbaglia Shaheen Emerging Artists Program

Piera Barbaglia Shaheen had a passion for opera and

cared deeply about the welfare of young people beginning their careers. Her generosity of spirit is honored in a fund created by a generous gift from Linda and David Shaheen. The Piera Barbaglia Shaheen Emerging Artist Program supports rising performers appearing at LA Opera, for whom a principal role at a prominent company can be a major career breakthrough. Sean Panikkar's performance as Gandhi in the company premiere of *Satyagraha* is made possible through the Piera Barbaglia Shaheen Emerging Artists Program. In recent seasons, the program supported the performances of Lisette Oropesa as Eurydice in *Orpheus and Eurydice* and J'Nai Bridges as Nefertiti in *Akhmat* (who is also appearing in *Satyagraha* as Kasturbai).

Named for Mr. Shaheen's mother, the program promotes the ideals of this

successful woman who was a strong proponent of education, built and ran a multi-national business, and was the center of a home infused with classical music and opera. Piera was born in America to Italian immigrants. Due to widespread discrimination against foreigners, her mother moved the family back to Italy when Piera was only two years old. Instilled with her mother's strong work ethic and commitment to education, she earned her degree in economics from a top university in northern Italy. As World War II raged around her, she joined the resistance efforts of the American underground to battle the fascists. After the war, she returned to America, furthering her education, marrying, raising a family, building her business, and becoming a generous contributor to her community.

"She deeply believed in the power of education as a principal force for change," says David Shaheen, "and through her

generosity she provided college scholarships for over 2,000 children of her employees." She passed these ideals onto her son and daughter-in-law, who created The David & Linda Shaheen Foundation, supporting LA Opera's education programming, scholarships for inner-city youth, as well as numerous arts, education and reproductive health programs. The legacy of Piera is also honored through the recent naming by Linda and David of the Alliance Piera Barbaglia Shaheen Health Services Academy. This public high school in South Los Angeles provides students a college preparatory environment in which to develop academic and technical skills along with leadership qualities that allow for a successful transition into college careers and adulthood.

LA Opera extends its gratitude to Linda and David Shaheen for honoring such a remarkable woman through this emerging artist program.

Who's Who in Satyagraha

Gandhi and His Circle

COSTUME DESIGNS BY KEVIN POLLARD



Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) was a revered social reformer who changed the world. The opera depicts events from his 21 years as a young attorney in South Africa, where he first developed his concept of peaceful civil disobedience. After his return to India in 1915, Gandhi led the movement for India's independence from British rule.

Guiding Spirits

Leo Tolstoy

One of the non-singing figures presiding over the stage action, Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) is the guiding spirit for Act I, representing the past. The great Russian novelist, a devout Christian, was deeply inspiring to young Gandhi, who was particularly moved by Tolstoy's 1894 treatise *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. Their extensive correspondence, during Tolstoy's final years, helped shape Gandhi's views on nonviolence based on love.



Kasturbai

In 1882, Gandhi wed Kasturbai Makhanji Kapadia (1869-1944) in a marriage arranged by their parents. Although far from submissive, she was devoted to her husband. "But for her unflinching co-operation I might have been in the abyss," he wrote. "She stood by me in all my political fights and never hesitated to take the plunge."



Miss Schlesen

Born in Moscow as Sonja Schlesin (1888-1956), she emigrated to South Africa with her parents in 1902. From 1903 to 1914, she was Gandhi's clerical assistant and she tirelessly supported his ideals. "She did not work for the sake of pay but for the sake of the work itself which she loved," he wrote. "I could not wish for a better secretary."



Mrs. Naidoo

Veerammal Naidoo was the wife of political activist Thambi Naidoo. They resided for a time at Gandhi's Tolstoy Farm, where she was a cook. In 1913, after protesting on behalf of Indian coal workers, she was sentenced to three months hard labor in prison. Twelve hours after her release, she gave birth to a son. "She was a sweet soul, a real friend," Gandhi wrote. "And what a heroine she was!"

Rabindranath Tagore

Representing the historical present as the guiding spirit of Act II, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was Gandhi's contemporary and friend. A Bengali poet and social reformer whose writing expressed a universal love of humankind, he won the 1913 Nobel Prize for literature. Through his extensive travels, he played a major role in introducing Indian culture to the West and vice versa. It was Tagore who gave Gandhi the title "Mahatma" [venerable], an honorific Gandhi himself never used.



Martin Luther King, Jr.

Representing the future as the guiding spirit of Act III, the pastor and activist Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) played a crucial role in ending the legal segregation of African-Americans in the United States. Dr. King was much inspired by Gandhi, whom he described as "the guiding light of our technique of non-violent social change." Through him, Gandhi's premise of nonviolence resurfaced in the American civil rights movement of the 1950s.



Parsi Rustumji

Born in India, Parsi Rustumji (1861-1924) moved at age 17 to South Africa, where he became a businessman and philanthropist. He was imprisoned several times for supporting Gandhi's protests and sheltered Gandhi in his home after the 1897 mob attack depicted in the opera.



Mr. Kallenbach

Hermann Kallenbach (1871-1945) was a wealthy Johannesburg architect who became one of Gandhi's closest lifelong friends; Gandhi described him as his "soulmate." In 1910, he donated the land which became Gandhi's cooperative community Tolstoy Farm. A German Jew, he became a staunch supporter of the Zionist movement.



Mrs. Alexander

On January 13, 1897, Gandhi was brutally attacked by a mob of white South Africans. Englishwoman Jane Alexander, the wife of Police Superintendent Richard C. Alexander, happened upon the scene and bravely stepped between Gandhi and his assailants. She shielded him with her parasol until constables arrived to escort him to safety. The incident increased Gandhi's stature in South Africa's Indian community.

Mythical Figures



Prince Arjuna

A mighty warrior depicted in the *Bhagavad Gita*, he rides to the battlefield with his guide Krishna to observe two armies on the eve of war. Realizing that he will lose friends and relatives on both sides, he questions the necessity of combat. In the opera's opening scene, Arjuna and Krishna sing with the historical Gandhi.



Lord Krishna

The Hindu deity is the key figure in the *Bhagavad Gita*, a 700-verse scripture framed as a dialog between Krishna and Prince Arjuna. Krishna counsels Arjuna to act selflessly and to fulfill his duty as a warrior. Krishna takes on different physical forms and is often depicted with blue skin.

DID YOU KNOW?

The sung text of *Satyagraha* is drawn from the *Bhagavad Vita* [The Song of the Lord], an Indian scripture written in Sanskrit more than 2,200 years ago. It greatly inspired Gandhi, who called it "The Gospel of Selfless Action."

Travel with LA Opera!



Clockwise from top: The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin with Ambassador John Emerson; the Musikverein in Vienna; Glyndebourne Festival Opera in England; a private tour of Christ Church at Oxford University.

From the storied Palais Garnier of the Paris Opera to the pastoral Glyndebourne Festival, members of LA Opera's Board and Opera Council have traveled to the most prestigious opera houses in the world, viewing productions from the opera world's most esteemed directors and hearing the most acclaimed artists—including LA Opera's own Plácido Domingo and James Conlon. To enhance these trips, travelers experience unique behind-the-scenes events—including meetings with the artistic leadership and performers at the various opera companies as well as private tours of museums and other major cultural sites. In addition to the Paris Opera and Glyndebourne Festival, trips have included visits to the Théâtre du Châtelet, Aix-en-Provence Festival, Vienna State Opera, Salzburg Festival, La Scala, Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Komische Oper Berlin, the Bavarian State Opera in Munich and many others. It is a wonderful opportunity for LA Opera enthusiasts to spend time with LA Opera's artistic leadership and develop friendships with other opera lovers in Los Angeles.

Our upcoming trip next summer will tour to **Milan, Bologna, Madrid and Barcelona** for an exciting slate of opera performances. Highlights include Plácido Domingo and James Conlon together in *Giovanna d'Arco* and LA Opera's highly acclaimed staging of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* by Woody Allen at La Scala. For more information about joining the Opera Council and the opportunity to travel with this group, please contact Janneke Straub at jstraub@laopera.org or 213.972.7665.



Meet *Satyagraha* Composer Philip Glass

Through his operas, his symphonies, his compositions for his own ensemble, and his wide-ranging collaborations with artists ranging from Twyla Tharp to Allen Ginsberg to David Bowie, Philip Glass has had an extraordinary and unprecedented impact upon the musical and intellectual life of his times.

The operas—*Einstein on the Beach*, *Satyagraha*, *Akhmatov* and *The Voyage*, among many others—play throughout the world's leading houses, and rarely to an empty seat. He has written music for experimental theater and for Academy Award-winning motion pictures such as *The Hours* and Martin Scorsese's *Kundun*, while *Koyaanisqatsi*, his initial filmic landscape with Godfrey Reggio and the Philip Glass Ensemble, may be the most radical and influential mating of sound and vision since *Fantasia*. His associations with leading rock, pop and world music artists date back to the 1960s. He is the first composer to win a wide, multi-generational audience in the opera house, the concert hall, the dance world, in film and in popular music—simultaneously.

He was born in 1937 and grew up in Baltimore. He studied at the University of Chicago, the Juilliard School and in Aspen with Darius Milhaud. Finding himself dissatisfied with much of what then passed for modern music, he moved to Europe, where he studied with the legendary pedagogue Nadia Boulanger and worked closely with the sitar virtuoso and composer Ravi Shankar. He returned to New York in 1967 and formed the Philip Glass Ensemble—seven musicians playing keyboards and a variety of woodwinds, amplified and fed through a mixer.

The new musical style that Glass was evolving was eventually dubbed “minimalism.” Glass himself never liked the term and prefers to speak of himself as a composer of “music with repetitive structures.” Much of his early work was based on the extended reiteration of brief, elegant melodic fragments that wove in and out of an aural tapestry. Or, to put it another way, it immersed a listener in a sort of sonic weather that twists, turns, surrounds, develops.



There has been nothing “minimalist” about his output. In the past 25 years, Glass has composed more than 20 operas; ten symphonies (with more on the way); two piano concertos and concertos for violin, piano, timpani, and saxophone quartet and orchestra; soundtracks to films ranging from new scores for the stylized classics of Jean Cocteau to Errol Morris's documentary

about former defense secretary Robert McNamara; string quartets; and a growing body of work for solo piano and organ. He has collaborated with Paul Simon, Linda Ronstadt, Yo-Yo Ma and Doris Lessing, among many others. He presents lectures, workshops, and solo keyboard performances around the world, and continues to appear regularly with the Philip Glass Ensemble.

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LA Opera's world-class artistry, on the stage and in the community, will continue thanks to the generosity and foresight of opera lovers who have established future gifts for LA Opera in their estate plans. LA Opera honors and welcomes these donors as members of Bella Voce with behind-the-scenes events. For more information or to join, please call Nancy Baxter, Director of Gift Planning, at 213.972.3141.

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Five Questions for Morris Robinson

Morris Robinson left a potential career in football to pursue his dream of becoming a singer, making a name for himself with his resonant bass voice, towering stature and commanding stage presence. His appearances as the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo* and as Parsi Rustomji in *Satyagraha* mark his seventh and eighth roles in Los Angeles, after previous performances here in *Rigoletto*, *Nabucco* and *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, to name a few.

How does your athletic past affect what you do as a performer?

Singing takes a lot of mental and physical preparation. My body is my instrument, just as my body was my instrument in athletics. You have to train your voice appropriately. When you're singing Verdi, that's different than singing Rossini, which is different than singing Bellini, which is different than singing Mozart. It's just like being an athlete, where every week a new team presents you with different challenges.

Do your roles in *Don Carlo* and *Satyagraha* have anything in common?

No, not at all. The Inquisitor is the puppet master in *Don Carlo*, powerful and stoic. The king comes to him for advice, and the Inquisitor reminds him "I've been through three kings so you need to listen to what I'm saying." My character in *Satyagraha* is a people-person and more emotional. Totally different approach!

How did you prepare your role in *Satyagraha*, with its shifting musical repetitions and libretto in Sanskrit?

I flew to Los Angeles early to give myself a month to learn *Satyagraha* with the staff, because it's literally impossible—at least for me—to learn the role alone. I had a coaching every day of the week for three weeks because I needed the guidance of professionals who understood this—and they were learning it too! It's better to make it a collaborative effort as opposed to trying to do it on my own.



PHOTO BY RON CADIZ

Most of your performances here have been conducted by James Conlon. What kind of rapport have you developed with him over the years?

Maestro Conlon is like my dad in the opera world; his expectations are extremely high and I try to meet them. Every time I see him, I want to put my best foot forward, and every time I put my best foot forward, he says, "That's not good enough, do this." And I appreciate that! That way, the art doesn't get compromised, my performances don't plateau, and I keep getting better. It's

been great for my artistry and my development, and I look forward to making more music with him in the future.

You must know Los Angeles quite well by now. What do you like to do in your spare time here?

There's something special about Los Angeles. I go to Santa Monica and walk up the coastline as far as possible. I also like to pick a rooftop bar, enjoy a drink, and just look out across the cityscape. Beautiful!

To learn more, visit MorrisRobinson.com.

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Juan Jesús Rodríguez and Craig Colclough in *Rigoletto* (2018). Photo: Ken Howard

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the hearts of others.” In the end he loses everything he holds dear. No matter how Elisabeth and Don Carlo emerge as characters, it is Verdi’s depiction of Philip that remains unforgettable.

The Libretto of *Don Carlo*

So far as we know, Verdi first saw a libretto with a plot about Philip and Elisabeth of Valois in 1849. That text was by his own Venetian librettist, Francesco Maria Piave, who sent Verdi a copy of his *Elisabetta di Valois*. In spite of his close relationship to Piave, Verdi did not compose an opera based on that text, although another musician did.

Verdi’s next chance to write about Philip came in the 1860s, and even then he did not leap at the opportunity. In fact, when he was approached about *Don Carlo*, he answered sharply, “Are you joking? Write for the Opéra!!!” No, he said, he was just a plain farmer. But as impresarios sometimes found, he could change his mind, and in time he began to consider the Paris offer. The Opéra management followed up by sending its representative to the composer’s villa, armed with a scenario based on Schiller’s *Don Carlos*; and with that Verdi cautiously expressed his interest. Next he received the libretto of the opera, a work by Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle; and with it in hand, he set to work.

The World Premiere of the Opera

Verdi finished *Don Carlo* and presented the world premiere at the Paris Opéra on March 11, 1867. Given the size and scope of this work, it is remarkable that he could finish it in a short time, but his unique understanding of the mysteries of the heart led him to create a truly heart-rending opera, something so lofty and transcendent that it touches the sublime.

The late Mary Jane Phillips, a frequent contributor to LA Opera publications, was the author of numerous books including the award-winning Verdi: A Biography. She was a regular contributor to Opera News and many other publications.

that itself tends to keep the focus on the individual—reinforces this on the dramaturgical level. *Satyagraha* unfolds in a series of tableaux that give ample space for Glass's musical process to cast its spell. While the episodes it recounts are taken from historical incidents, the effect onstage of even the most pragmatic of these (such as the community raising of a barn in the first act's "Tolstoy Farm" scene) resembles a series of rituals being reenacted.

Satyagraha has even been compared to a mystery play (perhaps including aspects of a Passion).

This sensibility is enhanced by the dramatic structure's use of echoing patterns. In a perceptive essay, Daniel Mendelssohn observes that each of the three acts involves a situation of conflict that is countered by an example of creative community engagement and culminates in a "nonviolent but forceful act of political resistance."

As with Glass's music itself, nothing is as simple as it seems on the surface. Several layers of meaning unfold simultaneously across the opera's seven scenes. The most "literal" of these involves the historical actions of Gandhi and his growing army of *satyagrahis* as they confront the challenges of systemic oppression. Juxtaposed with this is the mythological time evoked by the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Hindu scripture that recounts a dialogue between the human Prince Arjuna, hesitant to engage in a decisive battle, and his divine charioteer, Krishna. Their debate on the relative merits of action and non-action spurs Krishna's counsel on the moral and just life. The two figures appear on the battlefield in the opening scene (figured as giant paper puppets in McDermott's production), while the opposing armies are construed as the Indians versus the Europeans.

A third level, in a kind of dream time, is enacted in the raised niches upstage where three figures associated with Gandhi are represented, one presiding over each act as silent

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witnesses, using only gestures. These are Leo Tolstoy, a key inspiration for Gandhi's evolving idea of *satyagraha* (with whom he even corresponded near the end of the novelist's life); Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi's contemporary and associate and the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize for literature; and Martin Luther King, Jr., embodying the continuation of the *satyagraha* struggle in the West. "The culture of India emphasizes the system of the 'three times' (past, present, and future)," writes Glass, which these figures respectively represent. And while the various actions span two decades of Gandhi's career, the opera's overall arc progresses through an implied single day, from dawn to nighttime.

Glass crafted this multilayered scenario with the writer and performance artist Constance DeJong, who culled passages from the *Bhagavad Gita* for all of the sung text, which Glass set in the original Sanskrit. Hardly random, these highly poetic passages were meticulously chosen to illuminate what is transpiring onstage. For example, in the most "plot-driven" scene (at the start of the second act), when the Englishwoman Mrs. Alexander rescues Gandhi from a mob, the threatening chorus of men sings a passage in which Krishna describes the ignorant delusions of the wicked.

This strategy distances *Satyagraha* still further from Western conventions of theatrical realism: the libretto is not only in a foreign language (as if we were listening to a Puccini opera)—to whose sonic beauty Glass is especially sensitive—but presents a kind of gloss on what is happening onstage, a moral subtext rather than an expression of individual characters' thoughts or emotions. Glass remarks on the advantage he found in not having "an understandable text to contend with": the audience could "let the words go altogether" while "the weight of 'meaning' would then be thrown onto the music, the designs, and the stage action."

As for that music, many Glass aficionados rank it among the composer's very finest achievements. Though working with the "unplugged" conventions of classical tradition, the composer deliberately limited his instrumental palette to strings, triple woodwinds, and electric organ (as a kind of "binder" for the latter), with little solo writing—a soundscape that mimics the Philip Glass Ensemble aesthetic. Notes conductor Grant Gershon: "The orchestration allows Glass to create an extraordinarily lyrical and personal sound world that makes the opera feel more human and lets the voices come through so clearly."

Glass narrows down the almost manic experimental exuberance of *Einstein* to concentrate on the form of the chaconne: a technique of using repeated patterns as the basis for progressive variations—most hauntingly, in Gandhi's 30-fold repetition of an archaic rising scale (one of the score's recurring motifs) in the very final scene. He also deftly incorporates idioms familiar from conventional opera, nowhere more so than in the dominant role given to the chorus, so appropriate to *Satyagraha*'s themes of community and public action. In staging Gandhi's interactions—in addition to the scene with Mrs. Alexander, the cast includes his wife Kasturbai, personal secretary Miss Schlesen, and various supporters—Glass avails himself of opportunities to write for the kinds of ensembles so beloved in Italian opera (even including a sextet).

"*Satyagraha* does get epic but starts with humble materials," McDermott remarks. "Our production also shows how you can use simple materials and objects in a transformative way. You listen to how these glacial shifts happen in the music and realize: that's what *Satyagraha* is about. We have to trust this longer journey. And it's more than ever needed now."

A writer, critic, educator, and translator, Thomas May writes for leading arts organizations around the world. His arts blog is at www.memeteria.com.