

# opera europa NEWS

Winter 2014

The professional association of opera houses and festivals in Europe | L'organisation professionnelle pour les compagnies et festivals d'opéra en Europe

## Presenting the Opera Europa Digital Platform

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10000 - 87 Videos - 45 Collections



**Curated programme to promote the richness and diversity of opera in Europe**

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# Opera Europa Digital Platform

Opera Europa Digital Platform is the most ambitious undertaking in Opera Europa's history. It is a partnership with 15 designated opera houses and the broadcaster ARTE, but its greater purpose is to embrace the whole membership and to promote opera throughout Europe to a wider audience worldwide.

To that end, its launch next May will coincide with European Opera Days 2015 and with our major spring conference at Teatro Real Madrid.

The link which unites these events in pursuit of their common goal is **opera alive and online**.

Alive, because there is no substitute for the experience of singers communicating in the moment with an audience gathered together in a specific place. In Madrid, one of the most popular operas ever composed will do just that in the theatre and via the big screen to a large throng outside in the Plaza de Oriente. That space will also serve for the open-air concert celebrating European Opera Day.

Online, because technology now enables us to deliver the essence of opera to the intimacy of home computers and hand-held devices. Not only will they access performances which would otherwise be beyond reach, but they may offer edited highlights and background contextual material to enhance the experience. Our free opera website is an educative and promotional tool available to all.

Our ambition is to offer opera in all its richness and diversity but in a modern format. Our project will be developed over a three-year cycle which aims to become sustainable. Our fervent wish is that each member company will join us in Madrid, mount its own European Opera Day and benefit from this long-term investment in the future of opera.

**Nicholas Payne**

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# Opera Europa Digital Platform – your free opera site

**Opera Europa Digital Platform** is an online platform for the promotion and enjoyment of opera. It is designed to appeal equally to those who already love opera and to those who may be tempted to try it for the first time.

**Opera Europa Digital Platform** will offer a range of content from the most popular titles to the most innovative:

- a showcase complete opera each month from one of 15 partner theatres
- tantalising highlights from productions throughout Europe
- curated documentary material setting operas and opera houses within a wider cultural context
- a rich archive bringing history to life for today's audiences
- a forum for developing technical capabilities

**Opera Europa Digital Platform** is a partnership between Opera Europa, representing 155 opera companies and festivals; the cultural broadcasting channel ARTE; and 15 carefully selected theatres from across Europe. It is supported by the EC's Creative Europe programme and by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). It welcomes contributions from all those committed to sharing opera with a wider public.

**Opera Europa Digital Platform** will be launched in May 2015 with four showcase productions and a kaleidoscope of short-form material celebrating the dazzling variety of opera across Europe. The launch is timed to coincide with Opera Europa's conference in Madrid from 6 to 9 May and with European Opera Days 2015 whose theme is [opera alive and online](#).

Every opera producer, large or small, is encouraged to participate in this gathering of those committed to bring opera to a wider audience. It is in your company's interest to add its unique voice. It is in opera's interest to sing with a common voice.

## Nicholas Payne

As described here by Nicholas Payne, the Opera Europa Digital Platform is indeed an ambitious new venture for our network. This platform is part of a broader framework, which, between now and the end of 2017, builds on our ambitions to develop the opera sector in Europe in a number of ways: by helping the opera professionals develop in the digital age and by creating high-profile public platforms to encourage access to opera for all. Through all its activities, Opera Europa strives to put the work of all its members at the core of a world stage.

### So how will the project help opera professionals?

First, thanks to fifteen Opera Europa member companies, which have stepped up to take the lead in developing Opera Europa Digital Platform. Working alongside our broadcast partner ARTE, the opera partners are: Wiener Staatsoper, La Monnaie/De Munt Brussels, Finnish National Opera Helsinki, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Opéra national de Lyon, Komische Oper Berlin, Staatstheater Stuttgart, Teatro Regio di Torino, Latvian National Opera Riga, Dutch National Opera and Ballet Amsterdam, Den Norske Opera og Ballett Oslo, Teatr Wielki/Opera Narodowa Warsaw, Teatro Real Madrid, Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Welsh National Opera.

These companies are each at different stages in the development of digital strategies; from those who regularly film and stream opera online, to others who are setting the contractual elements in place with a view to streaming their first operas next year. These fifteen are our pioneers who will not only learn from each other during the next three years but will also share the experience gained with the wider membership. Each will address and find solutions to rights issues, build new skills in camera work and editing, investigate new financial models for streaming, and foster new partnerships with national broadcasters and local film producers.

This rich experience will be shared across the membership of Opera Europa in a number of concrete ways. Opera Europa undertakes, as part of the project, to bring together the key stakeholders – including broadcasters, publishers



Marie-Laure Denay (ARTE) with Audrey, Luke and Nicholas presenting the Opera Europa Digital Platform platform in Brno.



and these fifteen partner theatres – to find common transnational solutions to rights issues. Opera Europa will also draw up, over the course of the project, guidelines for good practice in working with broadcasters and independent producers. At each of the forthcoming Opera Europa conferences there will be opportunities to share, question and learn from the experience of the project partners. And finally, Opera Europa has set up a new specialist Forum for staff working with audio-visual and digital media (see page 12).

### **How will the project encourage greater access to opera in the eyes of the general public?**

Opera Europa's Digital Project aims to galvanise its members to share their activities in one online platform, which aims to be the reference point for all those curious about opera in Europe. We have seen how our European Opera Days initiative has created significant public visibility of the whole sector by focusing on 'open door' events over one weekend. Likewise, this new platform aims to create significant public interest in discovering the world of European opera through a single, authoritative online destination... accessible worldwide 24 hours a day, in English, French and German.

Content will be key to positioning our Digital Platform as the online reference point for European opera. The content will centre on live streams from the fifteen partner companies. These complete performances will be subtitled in at least six languages: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Polish. The content is, however, more far-reaching to suit a variety of audiences. It will extend to full contextual background material in shorter form: video, text, photographs, music, detailed historical information on individual European houses, selected performance archive, interviews with major artists, and access to manuscript holdings in opera house music libraries.

Our partnership with ARTE will be key in attracting visitors to Opera Europa Digital Platform. ARTE, as well as providing the technical support to implement our stand-alone platform, will contribute to the marketing efforts with an online and on air campaign. The project also makes provision for a Europe-wide marketing campaign focusing in particular on the launch in May 2015. Partnerships will be

### **Luke O'Shaughnessy**

Luke O'Shaughnessy is the newest member of the Opera Europa team. Luke adds to the considerable European experience of the OE team; he has worked over the last 15 years in the fields of opera and contemporary music in several countries including the UK, France and Belgium. He will be familiar to many Opera Europa members as the former director of RESEO, where he led, among other things, a number of European Commission funded cooperation projects. Earlier this year, he wrote our successful funding bid to the EC for the European Opera Digital Project and now joins the team as project manager. He is responsible for the day-to-day management of the project and liaising between the partners and the European Commission.

key here and the European Broadcasting Union has already committed to supporting the project. All the partners will monitor and react to the marketing initiatives as they are implemented. Indeed it is part of the professional development strand of the project to assess and make recommendations about how our Platform, which is without precedent, can build audiences for opera.

### **So how will the project give my opera more visibility?**

The Opera Europa Digital Platform will feature direct links to performances and activities of the opera companies which feature on the platform. The fifteen pioneer opera companies will naturally have an important place within our new site. But we believe that the platform can only fulfil its potential if it reflects the diversity of opera in Europe and the fact it is piloted by a network of over 155 European opera companies and festivals.

So, we end this presentation of the Opera Europa Digital Platform with a call of additional material. Many of your companies are already engaged in digital initiatives. **Please send us your proposals for short-form material which could be featured on the Platform at its launch by completing the questionnaire enclosed with this newsletter and returning it to [luke@opera-europa.org](mailto:luke@opera-europa.org) by 22 December 2014.** As the launch coincides with the next European Opera Days, you might consider sending us films, pictures or interviews about your open days, extracts of recent productions, videos which present your opera, archive or other historical material which give a flavour of your work.

The project's editorial group meets in early January 2015 to review all suggested contributions. The marketing directors from each of our partner companies have already met and we are now preparing the elements to trail the Platform before the official launch in Madrid in May 2015. At this launch, we unveil the site, its web address and first six months of content.

Yes, Opera Europa is depending on all the membership to make a success of Opera Europa Digital Platform. With far-reaching content from across our network, Opera Europa Digital Platform should quickly become the home of opera online. Thank you.

# Opera alive and online ...

by Audrey Jungers for the European Opera Days coordination team

8 successful editions of the European Opera Days have brought together many opera companies from the most distant parts of Europe to celebrate opera and spread the word. The 9th edition has no lesser ambition!

On the weekend of 8 to 10 May 2015, we invite each and every opera organisation to join in this massive PR exercise for opera. This year's theme is 'opera alive and online'.

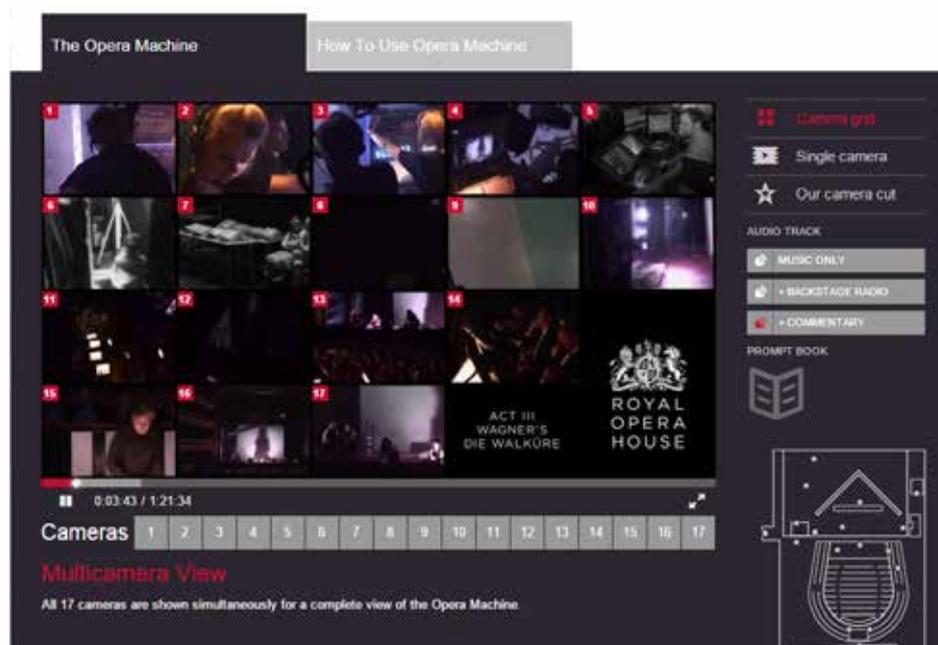
Of course, opera should be experienced 'in the flesh' – there is nothing comparable to the theatre experience, and many site-specific performances have proven that settings can enhance it. Audiences are always curious to discover a building and its inner workings – from the front of house to the stage, from the auditorium to the workshops. It's an opportunity for them to understand the complex machinery that is opera on a practical side. Better yet is when they come to appreciate the beauty of it all – be it by the proximity to instruments playing or choristers singing, or speaking, questioning and debating with artistic teams.

Opera is a live art form – every performance is different, and every one experiences differently. Opera is alive. Performances today don't look at all the same as they did 400, 250, 100, or even 10 years ago.

But today's audience is sometimes a bit shy, or lazy, and prefers to discover things from the comfort of their own home, behind a familiar computer screen. As you've read in the previous pages, Opera Europa is launching a new website to introduce the potential audiences of opera to the richness of the experience. This website will be launched on 8 May 2015, for the European Opera Days, and you are invited to be a part of it! We hope many opera companies will contribute in very varied ways to give web-visitors a taste of what opera around Europe is, whether it's with performance extracts, archive photos, sound or video, texts, interviews, documentaries... We encourage national coordination for the production of material about national opera scenes of some countries. An editorial group will be working on balancing the offer present on the website, so that diversity of material is guaranteed.

Over the years, many opera companies have organised fabulous activities. In order for the European Opera Days to reach their goal, the press and advertising campaigns have to be strong. This year more than even, with the launch of the website, messages must be coordinated. For this purpose, national coordinators are in place in several countries, and are looking forward to working with you. Please also involve [coordination@operadays.eu](mailto:coordination@operadays.eu) in your reflexion.

We look forward to hearing from you!



The Royal Opera House's Opera Machine which presents an extraordinary multi-angled view of the intricate theatrical process behind the scenes during a performance.

**Contact your national coordinators:**  
 Kari Eikli (OperaNorge Norway)  
 Laurence Lamberger-Cohen (ROF, France)  
 Krystian Lada (BeNeLux)  
 Henry Little (NOCC UK)  
 Barbara Minghetti (Italy)  
 Olga Prats (Opera XXI Spain)  
 Anastasiya Rakhmanova (Russia)  
 Peter Spuhler (Germany)

## ... at Teatro Real in Madrid from 6 to 9 May 2015

by Nicholas Payne and the Opera Europa team

You are invited to reserve the dates for Opera Europa's spring conference which will be hosted at the magnificent Teatro Real in the Spanish capital of Madrid.

For the first time since Paris in 2007, we shall be synchronising our major conference with the Europe-wide promotional celebration of European Opera Days. Indeed, we are adding still more content to the occasion by coinciding it with the launch of the Opera Europa Digital Platform.

The core days of the conference will be **Thursday 7** and **Friday 8 May**, which will be packed full of opportunities to learn more about our campaign to deliver opera to wider audiences. We expect participation from all 15 of the partner theatres in the project and from our principal media partner ARTE, but we also intend to involve our full membership and broadcasters within the EBU.

The programme will include sessions on financial models for online streaming, marketing and communications and technological development. It will also contain valuable networking such as the Co-production forum and our General Assembly for 2015.

It will culminate with a performance of Verdi's *La traviata*, which may be experienced live in the theatre, relayed on a big outdoor screen in the Plaza de Oriente and in cinemas, or as the initial online streaming showcase opera of our new platform.



European Opera Days on Plaza de Oriente © Javier del Real

**Wednesday 6 May** is designated as a preliminary day, when specialist groups will be welcomed for more intimate meetings. For those who are not obliged to return to their own theatres for their own European Opera Day, **Saturday 9 May** offers the chance to experience the joyful fiesta of Teatro Real's contribution with a mass audience in the Plaza de Oriente.

The detailed programme for Madrid 2015 will be published in our next newsletter at the end of February, when you may register for the event and choose from a variety of accommodation recommended by Teatro Real.

We believe that Madrid 2015 could be the most significant gathering in Opera Europa's history. We urge you not to miss it and to reserve the dates now!

# Opera Management Course in Como

Opera Europa's Opera Management Course is not a holiday. Although the banks of Lake Balaton in Hungary for the first edition and of Lake Como for the second one seem dreamy, the learning experience soon takes over and the 5 days are passed working in groups until late at night.

Participants from the second Opera Management Course, hosted by AsLiCo – Teatro Sociale di Como, joined the programme with varied levels of experience, coming from contrasted parts of Europe (and the world) with different skills and backgrounds. Confronted with each other's experience and by the expertise of the guest lecturers, they are now better prepared to face the challenges of the profession, and have a network of colleagues to do so.

[Read here what some of them told us about their intense week in Como.](#)

*'The opportunity and insight I gained from speaking to both the mentors and speakers was not only extremely useful and interesting but very inspiring and will help me grow as an Opera Manager of the Future.'*

*'This was an excellent opportunity to learn more about opera management and get an overview of important topics in opera business. I am happy that I participated and had opportunity to have discussions with opera insiders. Very interested about attending a second level of OMC.'*



*"What do I get out of bed for?" "Your generation has to be the brave one" "The barrier to the future of opera is what made it flourish" (All three by Graham Vick)  
"You should first say something about the team" (my group's advice to my introduction to the season presentation)'*

*'I fully recommend the Opera Management Course to anyone interested in working in the field of opera management, because the overall atmosphere of the course and the content of the lectures created an ideal learning environment, especially for participants of a young age. Interacting personally with the speakers and exchanging ideas with everyone was very inspiring, and the accommodation and Italian meals were marvellous.'*



*'This Opera Management Course was one of these really special experiences. Thank you all. I learnt so much!'*

*'Thank you so much for this adorable course. It was great to have this intercultural opera experience combined with the diverse knowledge of opera and related issues.'*

*'This was an utterly fantastic, inspiring and thought-provoking 5 days. Very intense and complex, but very worth it in every way. It was an excellent opportunity to meet other young opera professionals and more established professionals alike.'*

*'The goal of the course was a bit unclear, but considering all the different people with different backgrounds I think it was a very well done course. But I believe the people I met taught me the most! Thank you so much!'*

*'Everything was excellent: very well organised and with true dedication to this project. Audrey has done an amazing job in coordinating this week in Como both the conferences and the lunches and dinners. The group of people and the friendly and fun atmosphere surpassed my expectations. I am very happy with the experience and will recommend it to other young professionals that might be interested in this. It has been a great inspiration for me at this point of my career. Congratulations and keep working in this direction!!!'*



# Recommend your promising young professionals for Opera Europa's third Opera Management Course!

This summer, from 17 to 22 August, Festival Castell de Peralada, in the North East of Spain, will welcome Opera Europa's third Opera Management Course.



Library inside Castell de Peralada

The course is aimed at young(ish) professionals with potential and ambition to grow their careers in opera by understanding 'the bigger picture' of opera production. Participants will benefit from expert lectures on aspects such as Artistic programming and planning, Financial structures and management, HR and administrative issues, Production management, Marketing & Communications and Fundraising.

Following each lecture, they will break out into small groups under the leadership of opera managers to delve into practical issues and considerations and understand the decision processes which influence the management of an opera company.

This experience will increase their understanding of the various positions and responsibilities within an opera company, give them more confidence in their work and allow them to start building an international network of professional contacts.

Past contributors include:

Marc Adam (Nice), Philippe Agid (Paris), Bob Brandsen (Amsterdam), Gillian Brierley (Glyndebourne/New York Met), Peter de Caluwe (Brussels), Serge Dorny (Lyon), Hanna Fontana (Helsinki), Kasper Holten (London), Andrew Higgins (Glyndebourne), Mathieu Jouvin (Lyon), Daniel Knapp (Bregenz), Thomas Koch (Stuttgart), Thomas Lauriot dit Prévost (Brussels), Annilese Miskimmon (Aarhus), Frédéric Roels (Rouen), Cormac Simms (London ROH), Peter Spuhler (Karlsruhe), Karen Stone (Magdeburg), Marisa Vázquez-Shelly (Madrid) and Giovanni Vegeto (Como).

## Ideal profile of candidates

- Aged between 25 and 45 years old
- From any department and any position of the opera company
- Minimum of three years working experience, of which six months in the field of opera
- Fluent in English

**To apply, candidates must send the following documents before 1 February 2015 to [audrey@opera-europa.org](mailto:audrey@opera-europa.org):**

- CV in English
- 200 word personal presentation text / CV in English
- Letter of recommendation from a professional colleague

## Practical information

- The course will take place from 17 to 22 August at Castell de Peralada, in the library and the castle
- Accommodation and meals are included in the participation fee
- The working language is English
- All participants will be put up in a hotel, in shared twin rooms or in single rooms in Figueres.
- Participation fee: 750€ in a shared twin room; 850€ in a single room.



Castell de Peralada

# Brno/Ostrava Epilogue

Our autumn conference took us to two cities, Brno and Ostrava, in the Czech Republic in the footsteps of Janáček. His music is an inspiration and, coupled with fine Czech hospitality (admire doughnuts below), 230 delegates enjoyed ideal conditions to tackle a number of issues of the moments – from opera's role in post-industrial regeneration to how to address rights issues in the digital age.

*National folk music contains the whole man, his body, his soul, everything*  
– Leoš Janáček

*We keep tradition by developing it*  
– Jiří Nekvasil, National Moravian-Silesian Theatre Ostrava

## About Janáček

*The intellect of his words are tempered by the emotion of his music ... Janáček wanted to distil in his music something essential about the human condition... it taps straight into the artery of the human heart* – Robert Carsen

*Janáček brings an apocalyptic musical explosion to the last ten pages of his operas; the challenge for a director is to deal with this* – David Pountney

*One of the strengths of Janáček is that he is not sentimental ... We are all mortal; our time is limited. How should we fill our time on earth with something valuable? In Makropulos, the values which characters thought important are not important. Our mortality gives life its meaning* – David Radok

## About Business models

*Crisis = Danger + Opportunity. Teatro Real's new financial model is 30:30:30 – public sector: private sponsorship: ticketing, plus 10% from exploiting its own brand* – Ignacio García Belenguer, Teatro Real Madrid

*Theatre in Czech lands has often been viewed as more of a political than an artistic question... A Board of Directors needs to be created to eliminate political interests, to strike a new balance of power* – Jan Burian, Prague National Theatre

*I always try to establish the legal basis first, by asking on what legal grounds a claim is made* – Thomas Lauriot dit Prévost, La Monnaie/De Munt

*We talk about a young public, but it is also important to keep an older public. Make everyone welcome* – Peter Sotošek Štular, Slovene National Opera



For the first time, some of the conference sessions were streamed live. To view these sessions go to <http://janacek-brno.cz/en/opera-europa/>

**About the European Opera Digital Project and Rights**

*In the framework of our Live Streaming project, we have negotiated an increased limit with publishers for the amount of copyright material that can be used for promotional purposes. This limit is now moved from 3 to 6 minutes – Katharina Sedivy, Wiener Staatsoper*

*Who wants a percentage of nothing? – David Pountney, Welsh National Opera*

*Our artists are looking for reassurance principally. It will be important that a site such as the Opera Europa Digital Platform offers quality control – Ben Rayfield, IAMA*

*It's not about having a slice of the cake, it's about seeing if there is any of the cake left! ... We need to move from a culture of dependency to a culture of partnership ... The platform should be a trusted place where artists can be guaranteed a high quality presentation of their work in a curated environment to an intelligent, curious audience – Peter Maniura, BBC/EBU*

*At La Monnaie the audio-visual policy is part of our mission; our streaming is not a commercial activity, in the sense of generating income – Thomas Lauriot dit Prévost, La Monnaie/De Munt*

*IAMA and Opera Europa should agree a recommended form of wording in artists' contracts to cover free streaming on the free platform. Performers should be prepared to relinquish rights for this defined purpose – Helen Sykes*

**About opera in industrial spaces**

*Our opera house helps to define the city space here in Ostrava, whose centre has been so diminished in this post-industrial period – Jiří Nekvasil, National Moravian-Silesian Theatre Ostrava*

*We need to be part of the city. We need to infiltrate it, not be above or beyond it. ... We don't have an audience, we have a different audience for each of the types of work we put on. And we are happy with this – David Devan, Opera Philadelphia*

*We set out to find ways to attach people to the process ... We are opening the doors – not of theatres – but the spaces of the city ... There is no money in Birmingham to spend on unnecessary decoration because the audience make the space themselves. (And in fact there is not much money on necessary decoration, come to think of it, but that's not my point.) We are moving towards a freer or more three-dimensional way of theatre. We want to open the doors of the spaces of the city. We want to punch through the invisible curtain of the proscenium, so people become active participants ... In Birmingham, we put the audience (literally) in the middle of the music – Graham Vick, Birmingham Opera Company*

**About Fundraising**

*We need to stop interrupting what people are interested in but be the thing they are interested in – Kjell Englund, NorrlandsOperan*

*Don't be afraid to fail, you might fail on three projects but you will succeed for one and that will be amazing. – Susan Fisher, London ROH*

*It's not about the Opera company, it's all about the donor, it's all about them! ... The secret of fundraising is the make-you-cry-experience – if you make people feel wonderful, they will repeat pleasurable experiences ... Instil knowledge in donors: on economics; on how it all works. Take them behind the scenes so they develop a knowledge, because Opera is an impossible business proposition. Out of interest grows caring – Dory Vanderhoof, Vanderhoof & Genovese*



# Our newest addition: Audio-visual and Digital Media forum

by Luke O'Shaughnessy

Opera Europa is offering its members a new specialist forum for colleagues working in the area of audio-visual and digital media. Like OE's other forums, this group will support the professional development of a specific interest group and provide space – during and outside our main conferences – for considered reflection on areas of common concern.

## Why now?

As you will have read in these pages, Opera Europa is embarking on an ambitious venture online, the Opera Europa Digital Platform. The Board felt that this AVDM forum will be a good means to ensure that the benefits of the online platform, and its associated programme of professional development, are shared as widely as possible among the membership of the network.

The launch of this forum in 2014 is also timely at a juncture when some of the larger theatres in Europe are seeing their audiences online or in cinemas ('mediated audiences') surpassing in numbers those who buy tickets and sit in their auditoria. With many box offices running at capacity, digital media offer new possibilities to extend the reach of theatres, large and small, to national and even global audiences.

These changes, of course, raise fundamental questions. What digital content ... full length or short form? Produced by ... in house or independent teams? Paid for by whom ... which new economic models? Under what types of agreement with the rights holders? In partnership with ... broadcasters, independent production companies? For which audiences ... how can mediated opera bring more people into contact with the live event? And with what long-term impact on the artform of opera ... how will commissioning for the digital space become generalised?

Addressing these issues, the work plan of this forum will be driven by its members who will organise their work around a number of themes with a view to achieving the following:

- **Rights:** Find pan-European cross-sector solutions to rights issues relating to opera in the web environment that have previously been treated inconclusively at a national level.
- **Skills:** Enhance members' capacity to commission and/or produce digital content.
- **Financial models:** Help members to put in place viable economic models for digital content.
- **Partnerships:** Foster mutually beneficial relationships between members and broadcasters and other media operators.
- **Dissemination:** Encourage member opera companies to pool part of their digital content on Opera Europa Digital Platform and share the finding of this experience across departments and the membership.

There will no doubt be areas of overlapping interest with other forums, such as the Artistic, Business & Finance and Marketing & Communications. The OE team will make sure that common concerns are shared between the specialist forums.

## Who can join?

The fifteen partners of Opera Europa's Digital Project are the founding members of this forum but it is open to any member of staff, from an OE member company, working in the area of audio-visual and digital media.

## How to participate?

Contact Luke O'Shaughnessy ([luke@opera-europa.org](mailto:luke@opera-europa.org)), who is the coordinator of the forum. He will add you to the listserv and contact you about the next steps.

## When is the first meeting?

Thursday 12 and Friday 13 March 2015 in Strasbourg



Welsh National Opera's new digital project commissioned with The Space: Occupation – Five songs that shook the world.

# Developing a knowledge base within the Marketing and Communications forum

by Aline Chif

Last October, I joined the Marketing & Communications forum as they met in Bologna for a three-day meeting that combined informative sessions and teambuilding activities which showed off this vibrant city at its best.

Piero Formica posed the question ‘Do you try and create the consumer or respond to what the consumer wants?’

Nicky Thomas suggested that to get your message out, you should ‘Create debate, find advocates and build partnerships’ and to think about ‘opening up access’ for media of all types.

Kara Larson taught them how, with a bit of savvy data juggling – and trial and error – existing data can be used to help determine who you are talking to... Providing you ask smart questions!

Giulia Zanichelli from Expo Milano 2015 explained the theme of Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life.

In the evening, the group was serenaded by Christina Knorren and Francesco Ellero D’Artegna while learning how to make fresh pasta.

The steering group was joined by a few members and now consists of :

- Sue Janne Alsaker (Bergen National Opera)
- Sandra Eikelenboom (Nationale Opera & Ballet Amsterdam)
- Agustí Filomeno (Gran Teatre del Liceu)
- André Kraft (Komische Oper Berlin)
- Susanne Regelov Plaehn (Teatro Comunale di Bologna) and
- Ing-Marie Persmo (GöteborgsOperan) was nominated as group chairperson.

The forum’s steering group and I are intent on finding a way to create some long term goals with real benefits for its members.

We are very passionate about increasing knowledge within the group and the best way to do this is to share already existing knowledge with the forum. To achieve this, we would love to know what your area of expertise is, the one subject that you are passionate about and have a good knowledge of.

By having ‘experts’ in fields who are willing to share their knowledge and keep us updated in new trends within that field, we think it could greatly enhance the benefit of this forum.

So whether it’s Ticketing, Customer Behaviour, Subscription trends, Cultural tourism, Social media, Promotion, Digital, ... Please let me know!

The forum will also be key in helping the digital project get off its feet with a bang, so please join our listserv if you would like to know more.

The next Forum meeting is planned for 12 -14 March in Strasbourg ahead of our Spring Conference in Madrid in May.



# Scorca looks ahead

An interview with Nicholas Payne

With the launch of the European Opera Network in 1991, Marc A. Scorca, President/CEO of OPERA America, helped form Opera Europa. Twelve years later, he offered me invaluable advice after I was appointed Director of Opera Europa. Now celebrating 25 years leading OPERA America, North America's association for opera, Scorca, as ever, looks forward.



Marc A. Scorca © Jeff Reeder

**Nicholas Payne:** What lessons might European companies learn from recent developments in American opera companies?

**Marc Scorca:** The similarities and differences between the unique characteristics of our two systems always intrigue me. The United States has certainly seen a change in the opera environment in recent years, accelerated by the Great Recession of 2008. On the one hand, we have experienced decreases in attendance at main stage performances; while on the other hand, we see greater public interest in opera as demonstrated by transmissions to sports arenas, by the uptake on discounted tickets and the attendance at public performances. There is undiminished curiosity about the art form and opera companies are working on strategies to induce those who are curious to come into the opera house. Meanwhile, there are challenges in retention for our traditional audiences, who continue to attend opera, but less frequently. Subscription sales, formerly the backbone of our business model, are down; people seem less willing to make commitments a year in advance. People are interested in flexibility. They want to decide today or tomorrow what they're going to attend on Saturday night from among the increasing multiplicity of choices.

**NP:** It's easier to make people go who have already made the commitment than to get new people through the gate?

**MS:** At Opera Theatre of St. Louis, 26% of their audience last year was first-time attendees. The Lyric Opera of Chicago documented similar first-time attendance, helped in part by adding a classic American musical outside their subscription series. Opera companies are succeeding in attracting first-time attenders. The greater challenge seems to be to get people to come back again and again. And this is true across the arts, not just in opera: There is a huge number of people willing to try the traditional performing arts, who may come back in a subsequent season, but they are not becoming habitual attendees as they may have in the past.

**NP:** Is this a trend for which European opera companies should prepare themselves?

**MS:** Increasing choices in entertainment will continue to challenge all of us, equally in Europe and in North America. Producing organisations will be increasingly challenged to influence those choices. The other trend with a potential resonance for Europe is the growth in the number of artist-driven opera companies, which are now flourishing across the United States and Canada. The New York Opera Alliance, which Opera America supports, now comprises almost forty opera producing organizations. Some are neighborhood companies that give local singers a chance to perform; some are laboratories producing a steady stream of new work that is redefining opera for the 21st century. There are more than twenty such companies in the San Francisco Bay area. In Boston, a group of eleven opera companies recently came together for an evening showcase of their various styles and repertoires. Artists who cannot find steady work in the mainstream opera infrastructure, are coming together to perform on their

own. They are performing new and unusual work in traditional and non-traditional venues. In New York, a company called Opera Mission is led by a determined woman leading this company in performing all of the Handel operas chronologically. The first two were performed in a grand old hotel lobby. Empowered artists – entrepreneurial artists – are a force that is adding huge vitality to the American opera scene. They are providing opportunities for young directors, designers, conductors and singers. They are a workshop for new works. This infrastructure also discovers new audience members who enjoy walking down the street to a loft, warehouse, church or a nightclub that has been converted into an 'opera house.' The art form is being redefined into a 21st century American vernacular.

**NP:** Conversely, from your visits to Europe, are there particular tips, lessons, trends that you have learned over recent years?

**MS:** What strikes me in Opera Europa meetings is the question of proportionality in the conversation. In the United States, conversations are dominated by business, by the fundraising and the marketing imperatives essential to balancing budgets that have minimal government support. In Europe, even where government support is diminishing but still generous by our standards, there is more leeway for opera companies to talk about the art form: to talk about repertoire, to speak about different production styles. A probing artistic conversation threads through Opera Europa meetings that is more dominant than it is through OPERA America meetings. Many of the general directors in Europe function more like artistic directors. In the United States the general director is in charge of running the business. The artistic enterprise is only a part of a larger conversation about revenue generation and public relations and community value.

**NP:** Have you experienced a falling off in endowments and in levels of private funding? Do we have to invent new business models both in the US and in Europe?

**MS:** Private funding in the United States has not fallen off. If we look at the total amount given to opera companies by corporations, foundations and individual donors, the total has increased and continues to increase. Certainly, during the Great Recession there was significant retrenchment that resulted in deficits that companies are still working through. In the fiscal year 2013, the number of opera companies with balanced budgets has increased. Endowments have increased with the recovery of the stock market and many donors recognised during the Great Recession that increased endowments were essential to the health of organisations. There are a number of companies with endowments that have increased not just because of natural performance of the stock market, but because of additional generous contributions. The private support model continues to work in the United States. But there is legitimate concern about the significant dependence of many companies on a few very large donors and worry that some of the most generous donors to opera are older individuals. There are questions about whether the next generation in those generous families will continue the opera philanthropic tradition. But new donors are coming into the fold, established donors are more generous than ever, and, as opera companies discover new ways to develop and communicate their value in their communities, there are corporations and foundations that are increasing their support. Of course, it's difficult to change the business model without changing the business, and the fact is that we still are in the business of producing opera, which will always be a tremendously expensive undertaking.

**NP:** Do you believe that the private funding based model is more robust than the public funding one?

**MS:** Certainly. Individuals are motivated by their passion for the art form. They are willing to contribute in order to preserve and strengthen an organisation that affords them performances of the art form they love. Individuals can be far more consistent over time than corporations, foundations or government agencies.

**NP:** Are you worried about the high profile failures, like New York City Opera, Baltimore, San Diego, or is it just a question of natural survival of the fittest?

**MS:** How long should an organisation continue if it has lost its way? The story of New York City Opera is far more a story about the changes in New York than it is about the failure of the private support system. When Fiorello LaGuardia called New York City Opera 'the people's opera' in 1943, there was a thriving middle class comprising Italian and Jewish immigrants from countries that had spawned the opera repertoire. Today, the two largest immigrant groups in New York are Dominican and Chinese. Meanwhile, the Metropolitan Opera's repertoire and style of production have evolved and alternative opera companies have emerged that are more innovative than City Opera. City Opera's raison d'être diminished, and with it its audience and donor base. I think it's a much larger historical sociological discussion. Not every failure of an opera company is a failure of the system. Some represent a failure of practitioners to navigate the changing environment. Opera is becoming a far more complicated, a far more nuanced business than ever before. Staff members across the field need to learn best practices from one another. They need to share ideas, share strategies that are worth exploring. We need to provide professional development in specific areas so our staff members can develop these skills.

**NP:** Which is why we both run these slightly different skills development programs?

**MS:** Those are primarily for younger people coming into the field or rising in the field. Even the senior staff currently employed needs to keep their skills

sharp in a world that is changing faster than we wish. The skills will be applied differently in Paris than they are in Geneva or London or New York or San Francisco. But the fundamental understandings of market dynamics, of social media, of research, all of these things are basic skills that we must share across the ocean.



Viewing the 'Making of the Opera Center' video during the National Opera Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony (September 2012). © Ken Howard.

**NP:** Would it be beneficial to send Americans to our Opera Management Course and Europeans to your Leadership Intensive?

**MS:** It's certainly at the top of the list of possibilities here at OPERA America. In being exposed to a different system you gain new ideas as well as perspective on your own system. I find that I come back from European meetings able to articulate American strategies and practices more clearly because I have come to understand them in contrast to a different system. So yes, I think trans-Atlantic exchanges among our forums, both with established practitioners and among our young administrator training programs would be very beneficial.

**NP:** What is the state of American opera?

**MS:** When writing a recent message to the field, I listed a number of premieres of American operas being given by large and small companies. I felt that

my message lacked substance about artistic achievement outside the arena of new American work. Through my research, I found that it was difficult to come across an opera company – large or small – that isn't doing American work. I have learned that opera companies are finding it difficult to market unknown 19th century opera, like some of the lesser Verdi titles, or some of the Bel Canto works. American operas have living composers and librettists who can come into the city. The libretto may be based on a short story, a novel or a film that has resonance. It's easier to produce an American opera than *I masnadieri*.

**NP:** Do you reckon that it makes more sense to promote titles, whether it's *Rigoletto* or *Silent Night*, than to promote the generic opera brand? Is that a fruitful route to go down, or not?

**MS:** What a fascinating question. I think the brand of opera is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it evokes stereotypes of being long, old, boring and somehow inaccessible. On the other hand, it evokes images of glamour and a place to dress up. There's both an allure to some of those stereotypic images and something off-putting. We are conflicted about what the image is. What is the brand we should promote? In raising money, we promote the wonderful benefits that accrue to major patrons. And yet we also want to make people understand that opera speaks about universal stories in compelling musical and theatrical terms. Opera companies themselves are at the root of the conflict over brand opera. So yes, I think it is important to work at changing the perception of brand opera and making it more consistent.

**NP:** I was thinking about our similar but slightly different campaigns: your National Opera Week, our European Opera Days, our attempt to launch this European Opera Digital Platform, your bold creation of the National Opera Center. These are not titles, are they? They're promotional initiatives.

**MS:** Your first European Opera Days came before our National Opera Week and that was one of the wonderful initiatives from Opera Europa that inspired us here at OPERA America. Both these efforts help us convey the accessibility of opera. In terms of the National Opera Center, it is not associated with our work in promoting opera. Rather, it is an element of our strategy to help our members in very tangible ways. The Opera Center responds to the needs of our members for suitable space in which to rehearse, audition and make recordings. It has improved the working conditions for opera companies and artists, and supports the entire creative enterprise. For the public, we offer a variety of programs here, all of which are livestreamed Audition Recital Hall.

We now have more than 5,000 people a month visiting the Opera Center for auditions, recitals, rehearsals, readings of new works, meetings. We are really packed in the afternoons and evenings throughout the traditional fall opera audition season. Off-season, a wonderful array of instrumental and theatre companies use the facility. We have twenty-six teachers who now teach here on a regular basis and many who come on a casual basis. So, the Opera Center is really more than a facility. It has become a place where people run into

colleagues and friends. There is a reunion every day. It's a home for the industry and we are particularly delighted when Opera Europa members take advantage of the services that are offered.

**NP:** The dates of our next conferences in Madrid and Washington coincide. We didn't plan it like that, but can we make an opportunity out of it?

**MS:** This is a chance for us to use technology to connect our entire memberships. In terms of illustrating our unity and the potential for increased exchange of ideas, we really should take full advantage of it.

**NP:** The danger is we talk about cooperation and partnerships, and it remains as talk. You and I are concerned somehow to turn that into reality. I guess it means acknowledging both where we're going in different ways and where there is overlap and synergy. How may we do it practically and effectively?

**MS:** One avenue might simply be to offer travel subsidies. For our specialty forums, OPERA America offers travel subsidies to our members, through which we underwrite transit and accommodation of at least one staff member from a company to attend. It has resulted in a high level of participation. If we could find an international corporation that would be interested in visibility in the opera field on both sides of the Atlantic, we could similarly offer travel subsidies to Europeans who wish to come to an OPERA America forum or our annual conference, or to Americans who wish to go to an Opera Europa forum or conference. We would create the basis for much more exchange. We would ask them to prepare a short report upon their return, just so we know what they learned and what they gained from the international experience. I think it could be operationalised easily. We should start by seeing where corporate support is in common – perhaps an accounting firm or a bank that supports both European and American opera companies. A modest grant could stimulate a significant exchange.



Mock audition session at the 2013 Leadership Intensive seminar. © Audrey Saccone

# Modern Opera and Musical Theatre

## Cultural, economic and technological changes

What are the future directions of opera? How do we define its place in contemporary society? Who are the artists taking it forward? Where is the audience for modern opera? How may we best communicate with that public? Is there a brand called Modern Opera as there is Modern Art?

These and other questions which challenge artistic and business directors of opera houses today will be addressed during a three-day conference to be hosted by the resurgent Poznan Opera House, whose ambitious repertory shows a strong commitment to new work.

The conference will be book-ended by two important new operas. It begins with the première of Aleksander Nowak's *Space Opera*, a love story set on the first manned flight to Mars devised by Bulgarian writer Georgi Gospodinov. It concludes with a performance of Bruno Coli's chamber opera *The Angel of the Odd* based on a story by Edgar Allan Poe.

Conference participants invited will be leading figures involved in the creation and production of opera today: composers, librettists, conductors, stage directors, musicologists, critics, theatre and marketing managers.

In order to enable constructive debate and practical conclusions, delegates will form groups to address specific topics under three generic headings:

- Cultural issues and definitions concerning the genre of opera and related musical theatre; their relationship with pop culture; the role of the stage director in the creative process; traditional buildings or found spaces
- Economic issues concerning return on investment; presenting new work in the context of the masterpieces of the past; new methods of marketing modern opera; educating the audience
- Technological issues involving both creation and presentation; new media; internet, social media

Such categories are not exclusive. Presentations are encouraged which will confront the burning perceptions of practitioners today. An art which lives only in the past is a dead art. Renewal is essential. Yet it must engage with topics which matter to today's audiences, and speak and sing in a language which they may understand.

If such matters concern your opera house, [please reserve the dates 15 to 17 March and register your interest with Poznan's Teatr Wielki or through Opera Europa](#). You may discover more about Poznan and its Opera at [www.opera.poznan.pl](http://www.opera.poznan.pl) where information is available in English and German as well as Polish.

The project is being led by Poznan's General Manager, Renata Borowska-Juszczynska, Artistic Director, Gabriel Chmura and professor Marcin Gmys (Department of Musicology at the

Adam Mickiewicz University) with support from Opera Europa. The official partner of the conference is The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, The Institute of Music and Dance, and The Ignacy Jan Paderewski Academy of Music in Poznan.

[Conference at Teatr Wielki Poznan from 15 to 17 March 2015](#)

Direct contact regarding the conference may be made through [kkurzynska@opera.poznan.pl](mailto:kkurzynska@opera.poznan.pl) or [gerald@opera-europa.org](mailto:gerald@opera-europa.org)



*The Angel of the odd*, Bruno Coli, premiere 7 VI 2014 © Katarzyna Zalewska

## Don't forget our website!

Do you ever find yourself looking for the contact details of your peers in another house ?

By simply logging into to our website and going to the address book, you can access all the names and titles, email addresses and phone numbers of everyone in our database!

We update it regularly when we are informed of a change in staff or position but each member can do it themselves by logging in.

It's a really great tool and it's quick and easy to consult.

Log in

> go to Member resources on the left menu

> Address book



Do you urgently need benchmarking information before an important meeting?

The new Financial & HR Company profiles database is the place to look. Representatives of the Business & Finance forum and the HR forum have been working towards a harmonised questionnaire which allows for you to compare your company to others on a list of criteria: seating capacity, number of opera productions, number of opera performances, levels of subsidy, % of subsidy on total income, total permanent staff, total personnel costs in % and many others. But to have access to the database, you must first fill in the questionnaire. Contact [audrey@opera-europa.org](mailto:audrey@opera-europa.org) for more information.

Looking to recruit staff? Opera Europa's job offers page is one of the most visited of the website, and our specialist forums spread the information to a large number of professionals.

Contact Opera Europa specialist professionals in one email thanks to Opera Europa's thematic listservs, linked to each of our specialist forums. This is an easy way to contact over 100 professionals specialised in one given field.

The Technical & Production listserv sees technical questions go by, as 'Who can recommend a good floor?' or 'what is your experience with lighting xxx?'. The Executive Assistants listserv allows assistants to General Directors to stay in contact.

The Costume listserv sees many measurement requests for international guest singers. The Fundraising & Friends listserv, the Marketing & Communication listserv, the Human Resources listserv and the Business & Finance listserv mostly distribute information about the specialist forum's activities.

All specialist listservs also distribute job offers for that particular sector. Only people signed up to the listserv may send out an e-mail. Contact [aline@opera-europa.org](mailto:aline@opera-europa.org) to sign up to a listserv.

## New members in 2014

Since the announcement in our summer newsletter of 16 new member theatres, a further 7 new members have joined Opera Europa, so that the total has now reached 155, an all-time record number.

The growing German contingent has been further swelled by the adhesion of an important theatre from the Rhein-Main heartland, the Hessisches

Staatstheater Wiesbaden under its eminent new Intendant Uwe Eric Laufenberg.

Our Festival membership is enhanced by the Bergen International Festival, energetically led by CEO & Artistic Director Anders Beyer, a cultural polymath committed to exploring new ways of presenting art to audiences.

London contributes two contrasted new members. Opera Holland Park has become a popular opera festival presenting six fully-staged operas each year between May and August under the inspired direction of James Clutton. Independent Opera at Sadler's Wells has just concluded intensive auditions and workshops to choose a young director for its UK première staging of

## RESEO Opera for Young Audiences Award 2014

The first winner is:

The Tempest – a Tale of Miranda and Ferdinand

Commissioned by Norwegian Opera and Ballet's Children's Chorus from librettist Rune Belsvik and composer Nils Henrik Asheim as a work for young performers, the work focuses on the transition from childhood to adulthood and first love. The story revolves around two child characters from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: Prospero's 12-year-old daughter Miranda and Ferdinand washed ashore from a shipwreck.

*Stormen* is Norwegian Opera's Children's Choir and the Ballet School's first joint production. Over 170 between 6-17 years of age perform onstage and in the orchestra pit. The jury were impressed by 'skilled and talented young people on stage and in the pit creating this new work for young audiences. Norwegian National Opera's care was reflected in the high quality production values. The story was enchanting and relevant to young audiences; and the new score by Nils Henrik Asheim was full of personality and variation, including electronics.'

RESEO's new prize encourages and promotes quality opera performances for young audiences. Organised within the framework of Jeunesses Musicales international's YAMA awards, it highlights an inclusive and cross-arts perspective. The Jury comprised five European specialists during a two-day selection process. 19 productions from throughout Europe were submitted. The Jury commended the quality and diversity of the entries received. The award ceremony took place in Umeå, Sweden, on 7 November 2014.

Launch of the next edition of the award will take place in spring 2015.

## Opera on Screen

by IMZ International Music + Media Centre

Avant Première Music + Media Market Berlin

10 – 13 FEB 2015 / Hotel Scandic Potsdamer Platz

Avant Première Music + Media Market Berlin is the annual international trade fair and co-production market for classical music- and dance films in Berlin. The Avant Première Screenings feature over 500 films in classical- or contemporary music, opera and dance as an exclusive preview to major international broadcasters like arte, ZDF, BBC or NHK, distributors like C Major Entertainment or EuroArts and film production companies like Clasart Classics or Telmondis.

Representatives of major cultural institutions like The Metropolitan Opera or the Staatsoper Berlin next to agencies, orchestras or festivals profit from exclusive networking and business opportunities and a comprehensive supporting programme presenting current topics like live streaming, grand rights or technological innovations for cultural applications.

Full programme / cooperation with European Film Market:  
[www.avantpremiere.at](http://www.avantpremiere.at)



Šimon Voseček's *Biedermann und die Brandstifter* next November.

We introduced an affiliate member category to serve organisations which are not opera companies or festivals but which have strong operatic connexions, and are pleased to welcome three such new members. **Camerata Nuova** and its founder sponsors Armin and Marja

Kretschmar are well known to existing members as the inaugurators and continuing benefactors of the European Opera-directing Prize, now working towards its 8th edition. **Il Pomo d'Oro** is a period-instrument orchestra founded in 2012 with a special focus on opera. Named after Cesti's epic opera and based in Zürich, it performs throughout Europe. **Intermezzo**

**Programaciones Musicales** is a chorus management and backup vocals company, based in Astigarraga near San Sebastián and with ten years' professional experience.

Representatives of several of these new recruits joined our Czech conference, and we look forward to their further engagement next year.

## Save these dates

Visit [www.opera-europa.org](http://www.opera-europa.org) for full information, practical details and registration forms.

### 6 January 2015

Fedora Prize winners Gala performance at Opéra Garnier in Paris. For tickets contact Edilia Gänz at [edilia.gaenz@fedora-circle.com](mailto:edilia.gaenz@fedora-circle.com)

### 22-25 January 2015

66th AsLiCo Competition for Young Singers of Europe, Teatro Sociale Como, Italy

### 10-13 February 2015

AVANT PREMIÈRE MUSIC + MEDIA MARKET BERLIN 2015  
The international trade fair for performing arts films

### 12-13 March 2015

Audio-visual & Digital Media forum meeting at ARTE, Strasbourg, France

### 12-14 March 2015

Marketing & Communications forum meeting at Opéra national du Rhin, Strasbourg, France

### 15-16 April 2015

Opera Vlaanderen Conference – Judaism in Opera  
Gent and Antwerp, Belgium

### 24-25 April 2015

Human Resources forum meeting at Royal Danish Opera, Copenhagen, Denmark

### 6-9 May 2015

**Opera Europa Spring Conference – Opera alive and online**  
**Teatro Real, Madrid, Spain**

### 8-10 May 2015

European Opera Days – Opera alive and online

### 14-16 May 2015

RESEO Conference – Opera for toddlers, Lisbon, Portugal

### 17-22 August 2015

Opera Management Course  
Festival Castell de Peralada, Spain

## Opera Europa Board

At its General Assembly in Brno the Board of Opera Europa elected Birgitta Svendén, General & Artistic Director of Royal Swedish Opera, and Jan Burian, General Director of National Theatre Prague to replace Tom Remlov and Caroline Sonrier

### President

Eva Kleinitz  
Opera Director, Staatsoper Stuttgart

### Vice-President

Kasper Holten  
Opera Director, Royal Opera House Covent Garden  
Walter Vergnano  
Sovrintendente, Teatro Regio di Torino

### Treasurer

Thomas Lauriot dit Prévost  
Gestionnaire financier, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels

### Secretary

Barbara Minghetti  
President of AsLiCo, Teatro Sociale di Como

### Members

Bob Brandsen  
Production Manager, De Nederlandse Opera  
Jan Burian  
General Director of National Theatre Prague  
Waldemar Dąbrowski  
General Director, Polish National Opera Warsaw  
Serge Dorny  
General Director, Opéra national de Lyon  
Jean-Yves Kaced  
Directeur Commercial et du Développement,  
Opéra national de Paris  
Susanne Moser  
Business Director, Komische Oper Berlin  
David Pountney  
Chief Executive & Artistic Director Welsh National Opera  
Peter Spuhler  
Generalintendant, Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe  
Birgitta Svendén  
General & Artistic Director of Royal Swedish Opera,  
Marisa Vázquez-Shelly  
Director of External Relations and Patronage,  
Teatro Real de Madrid