

A close-up portrait of David Dichiera, an older man with white hair and a mustache, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark blue or black collared shirt. A large, stylized red signature 'D. Dichiera' is overlaid across the top half of the image. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a gallery or studio setting with various objects and colors.

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

DAVID DICHIERA
2013 Kresge Eminent Artist



THE KRESGE EMINENT ARTIST AWARD HONORS AN EXCEPTIONAL ARTIST IN THE VISUAL, PEFORMING OR LITERARY ARTS FOR LIFELONG PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO METROPOLITAN DETROIT'S CULTURAL COMMUNITY. DAVID DICHIERA IS THE 2013 KRESGE EMINENT ARTIST. THIS MONOGRAPH COMMEMORATES HIS LIFE AND WORK.





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The CD of David DiChiera's "Four Sonnets" may be found inside the back cover of this publication.

David DiChiera overlooks the lobby prior to the restoration of the Detroit Opera House at the 1994 Opera Ball.



“An opera begins long before the curtain goes up and ends long after it has come down. It starts in my imagination, it becomes my life, and it stays part of my life long after I’ve left the opera house.”

– Maria Callas

Would Detroit have grand opera without David DiChiera? Thankfully it’s a question we need never ask. Fifty-one years ago he moved to the area and the rest, as you will read in the pages of this book, is his story.

The Kresge Foundation — its trustees and staff — applauds David DiChiera, our 2013 Eminent Artist, for his lifelong devotion to the magic of opera.

He is impresario, the founder of Michigan Opera Theatre and its stunning home, Detroit Opera House.

He is composer, crafting the luminous score for “Four Sonnets,” poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay (an original recording is included in this book), and the highly acclaimed full-length opera, “Cyrano.”

He is arts activist, launching the careers of performers of color and mounting productions that reflect the stories of those who live in our community — African Americans, Armenians, Poles and others.

Opera has been captivating audiences for some 400 years. Patrons locally, regionally, nationally and internationally cherish David DiChiera for his passion, his creativity and his unrelenting drive toward the future. He is a community treasure.



Rip Rapson
President and CEO
The Kresge Foundation

A half a century ago I arrived in Michigan as a teacher and composer to help build the school of music at the newly established Oakland University. **But I soon discovered that opera — the art form I so passionately loved — had little presence in this major urban center. So after a decade of producing staged operatic excerpts and touring them to schools and community centers, the time seemed right to find a home in which to establish a permanent professional opera company in Detroit. Of course, there was significant pushback: an opera company in a blue collar town? A home in the core of a city that had recently experienced devastating riots?**

But in 1971 we opened the Music Hall as the opera's first home and the beginning of an entertainment district. Building bridges into the community was a primary mission — making sure that the African American community, the majority of Detroit's population, was represented on the stage. Not only by nurturing artists such as Kathleen Battle and native Detroiters Maria Ewing, who have gone on to great international careers, but by producing works that reflected the African American experience. There were other ethnic communities whose traditions should also be celebrated. We produced the North American premieres of "Anoush," the Armenian national opera and the first American performance of Polish operas "The Haunted Castle" and "King Roger." We look forward to presenting an opera on the life of Frida Kahlo in the 2014-15 season. The mission of embracing and reflecting the incredible diversity of our community is an ongoing part of the Detroit Opera House mission, because we are all enriched as we share and experience one another's culture.

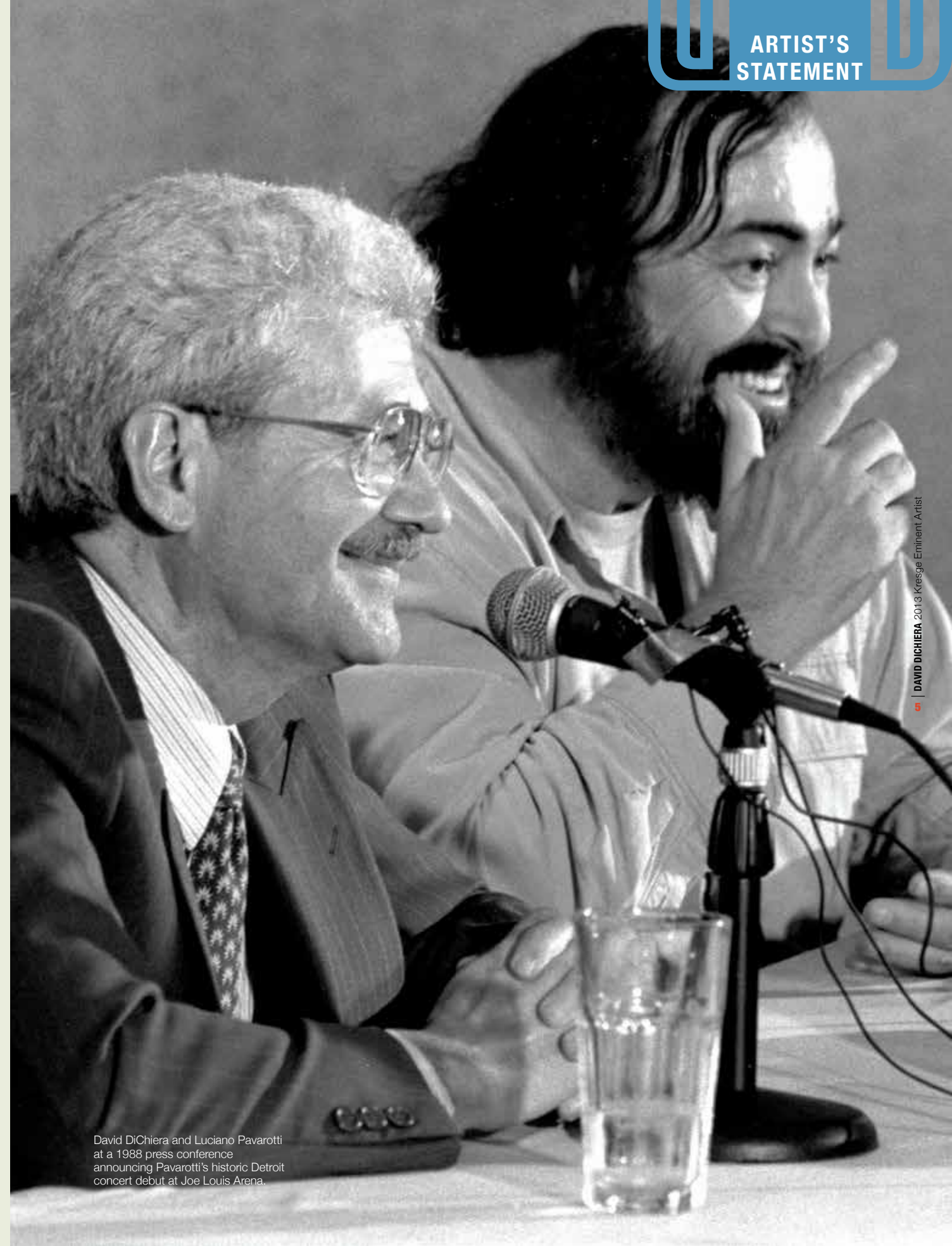
My own music making was set aside, as I strove to make a difference for opera as a national artform. Using my presidency at OPERA America as a bully pulpit, we established an initiative dedicated to encouraging opera companies to commission new works. In 1979, my first year as president, only one new opera had been premiered in North America. Nothing can persuade directors of opera companies like money, so with the establishment of a fund called Opera for the '80s and Beyond, a decade of new operas emerged. Even with the wealth of these operas, it was still very clear that repertoires were not reflecting the diversity of cities across the country. So taking a page from our experience in

Detroit, we established a new initiative called Opera for a New America, and provided grant-based support to companies for the commissioning of new works that reflected their various constituencies. Remaining true to that mission to this day, with the completion of our own Detroit Opera House, we presented the world premiere of "Margaret Garner," with libretto by Toni Morrison and hosted OPERA America's national conference, which was devoted to diversity.

I am particularly proud of our work in education. It was Karen DiChiera's devotion to the concept that every child can create and perform — whether they live in the inner city of Detroit or in the most remote areas of the Upper Peninsula. The audience of tomorrow needs the opportunity to experience and participate in the arts. As the arts become more and more marginalized in our schools, the outreach of our cultural institutions becomes ever more essential.

Opera is an extension of something that is everywhere in the world — that is, the combination of music and story. It's really a universal art form. I believe all arts are transformative, in terms of art, quality of life, as well as quality of community.

Over these last 40 years I've brought arts that I'm passionate about to our home here (the Detroit Opera House) and to people around the state, through extensive programs where we go into communities. So people can enjoy an art form on many levels — on a grand stage or in the intimacy of a small community center. It can take many formats. It's all about the same thing — expressing emotions through the power of music. 🎭



David DiChiera and Luciano Pavarotti at a 1988 press conference announcing Pavarotti's historic Detroit concert debut at Joe Louis Arena.

THE
IMPRESARIO

David DiChiera in 1994 surveying the old
Capitol Theatre during its transformation
into the Detroit Opera House.

DAVID DICHERA 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist

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“Here we will sit, and let the sounds of music
creep into our ears.”

- William Shakespeare



The 5-year-old David DiChiera in a precocious display of showmanship, Pennsylvania, 1940.

THE GRAND VISION OF DAVID DICHIERA

BY SUE LEVYTSKY

Spring arrives slowly in Detroit. The first hint of a thaw is evident, however, in the office of David DiChiera, general and artistic director of Michigan Opera Theatre, grand duke of the Detroit Opera House and patriarch of the performing arts in Michigan.

Mountains of paczki, traditional pre-Lenten Polish pastries savored by Detroit's Catholics on Shrove Tuesday, balance precariously on every available surface. "Have one, have twenty!" offers DiChiera. Such gestures of affection are familiar at MOT's Grand Circus headquarters in downtown Detroit, sweet evidence of how much the impresario is beloved by his fans and supporters in this most unlikely of opera towns. "They all seem to think I need to eat," says the silver-haired DiChiera. "What I really need is to sleep."

Not likely, given the 78-year-old DiChiera's schedule. He has just returned from New York, where he has seen a production of the new opera "Anna Nicole," — "it's so much of our time" — and is dealing with last minute casting changes in MOT's coming production of "Fidelio" — "the male lead had to be replaced." He's due to review MOT's finances with Board Chairman R. "Rick" Jamison Williams Jr., and must offer critique of proposed sets for the 2013-14 roster of productions. There's press coverage to discuss, donors to dine with and, of course, the opera house itself, where he attends every performance.

There is little time for sleep, as DiChiera's day invariably expands to include the many jobs that are his job: rainmaker, composer, publicist, marketer, fundraiser, talent scout, staff psychologist,



Autographed score from composer Sammy Cahn to David DiChiera.

community activist, showman, visionary.

By any standard, David DiChiera is the master juggler in the world of contemporary opera, the only founder of two opera companies — the Michigan Opera Theatre and Orange County's Opera Pacific — and the only general director in opera to lead three opera companies simultaneously.

He is a living legend in the performing arts, known for encouraging African American artists in all aspects of

opera, for forging collaborations with other opera companies, and for supporting the composition and productions of new operas that reflect the communities in which they are performed.

His achievements and leadership have been recognized internationally, culminating in 2010, with his selection by the National Endowment for the Arts for its Opera Honors award, the nation's highest accolade for lifetime achievement in opera. He has received numerous honorary doctorates and been recognized by the mayors of New York, San Francisco, New Orleans and Detroit, as well as by the governments of France and Italy.

In 2013, David DiChiera was named Kresge Eminent Artist by The Kresge Foundation for his achievement in bringing opera back to the city, making it accessible

to new audiences and creating the Detroit Opera House from an abandoned theater just off Grand Circus Park.

“His vision — and what he has done with it — has certainly encouraged others to create their own vision, and given companies like Ford a reason to make a significant investment in Michigan Opera Theatre and in Detroit,” says Ford Motor Company Fund President Jim Vella. “I can’t imagine what the entertainment district in Detroit would look like if not for David DiChiera.”

First Notes

David DiChiera was born in 1935 in the town of McKeesport, Pa. His parents, Cosimo and Maria DiChiera, were Calabrian immigrants who settled in the Pittsburgh area in 1920 to escape the economic devastation in Sicily after World War I. DiChiera’s father supported the family working in Pittsburgh’s steel mills; his mother took in laundry to help with bills.

McKeesport is a gritty town, a “place to get out of,” according to another former resident, Michigan Opera Theatre board member, Nora Moroun. Yet DiChiera’s earliest musical impressions were made there, when as a young child he would spend Saturday afternoons creating imaginary theater presentations in his bedroom while listening to broadcasts from New York’s Metropolitan Opera.

DiChiera would later say he found the broadcasts “thrilling and overwhelming,” sensations that were only reinforced when he attended his first opera, “Il Trovatore,” on a school outing. It was a seminal event for the young man. “That was the beginning,” recalls DiChiera. “It was something that I couldn’t live without in some way or another.”

David’s interest in music and opera would continue to grow after his family moved to California, his passions further fueled with the donation of an old, dilapidated upright piano. “It was out in the garage. I’d go out there by myself, afraid, but I wanted to practice, so my sisters would come and bring their books and sit while I played on,” said DiChiera in an interview for the National Endowment for the Arts.

DiChiera’s dedication to music would lead him to turn composer and pen a concerto for unaccompanied

piano by the time he was 12. His first performances were given audience in the charismatic church his mother attended. “I was considered a little prodigy there and it did have a big effect upon me,” says DiChiera. “Being looked upon as I was in the church, it did help to build a confidence in my own abilities.” David entered a junior competition in San Diego at age 13, played his concerto and earned first prize.

DiChiera won a full scholarship to study piano, composition and musicology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), with the intention of becoming a concert pianist. But “there were so many talented pianists around, many of them not even performance majors but engineers!” DiChiera says in remembering his time in the music department.

The possibility of a different career path presented itself when David joined UCLA’s opera workshop as a pianist and coach, where the collaborative aspects of the operatic form proved enormously satisfying. “Being in opera in whatever way, whether you were singing, whether you were the pianist or whether you were working backstage, you were part of something that was such an exciting adventure of putting a great work together,” says DiChiera.

DiChiera studied composition with noted American composer Lukas Foss while at the university, and earned his MA in 1956 with highest honors and election to Phi Beta Kappa. He was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to Italy where he was commissioned by the United States Information Service to compose a sonata for the Naples Festival of Contemporary Music. He concurrently researched and contributed a series of articles on 18th-century Italian opera for the world’s leading music encyclopedias, including Ricordi’s *Enciclopedia della Musica*, Groves *Dictionary of Music* and Barenreiter’s *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*.

DiChiera would culminate his studies at UCLA with a Ph.D. in musicology, writing his thesis on the Neapolitan School operas of the 18th century.

Destiny: Detroit

“La Forza del Destino” — fate — has its own ideas in Verdi’s great opera and so it proved for DiChiera when he received a phone call from the chancellor



Young David outside his family home in McKeesport, Pa.

of what was Michigan State University-Oakland in 1962 (becoming Oakland University in 1963). The institution was growing and looking for a musicologist to develop its music and theater departments.

DiChiera was intrigued and accepted the chancellor’s offer, becoming a professor and ultimately the chairman of music at Oakland University. “I went there and got involved in developing what was called the Meadow Brook Theater and the Department of Music and the Meadow Brook Festival,” says DiChiera.

Yet the siren call of opera never diminished, and DiChiera was soon nursing the idea of establishing an opera company in Detroit.

Opera wasn’t a stranger to Detroit, having made its first appearance at the Old Detroit Opera House (1869–1963) at Campus Martius in downtown Detroit. The city had played host to the annual tour of the Metropolitan Opera, but a full-scale Detroit-based opera company? That was an entirely new notion.

DiChiera began slowly, seeing the potential in an education program of the Detroit Grand Opera Association called Overture to Opera. (The association sponsored the Metropolitan Opera’s Detroit visits.) DiChiera reinvented the program in 1963, focusing on the educational aspects the program offered and seeing the possibilities of this new programming in terms of audience growth. Programming and community education united as marketing tools for the new venture, a practice that would continue through DiChiera’s career. “An opera company should be working in the schools year round,” says DiChiera. “It should be giving opportunities to local singers. It should be building audiences, it should be all those things.”

It was an approach whose importance was underscored by DiChiera’s wife to be and associate at Michigan Opera Theatre, Karen VanderKloot, a passionate advocate of arts education. DiChiera and VanderKloot would marry in 1965 and have two daughters, Lisa and Christina.

But “there were really three children in our family,” says DiChiera’s younger daughter, Christina. “Guess which child got the most attention — the opera!”

David DiChiera was nothing if not patient in his pursuit of his dream and in 1971, thanks to his



Soprano Roma Riddell, a Grosse Pointe native, in rehearsal with DiChiera for a 1965 Overture to Opera performance of “Tosca.”

energy, organizational abilities and charisma, he established Michigan Opera Theatre, Michigan’s own professional opera company. (The name was formally changed from Overture to Opera to Michigan Opera Theatre in 1973.) The company made its first home in Detroit’s Music Hall Theater, a landmark that had been headed for demolition. DiChiera also spearheaded the establishment of the Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts in 1973, becoming its founding and artistic director in addition to acting as general and artistic director of MOT.

DiChiera’s selection of the Madison Avenue home for his opera company was questioned by many of the city’s most influential arts patrons, given the tremendous exodus of residents into the suburbs during the 1960s.

But the impresario was passionate in his belief that “cultural institutions belong in the heart of the city,” a conviction shared by his young family, who declared the Music Hall their “friend, a warm, second home.” “We felt like ‘Eloise at The Plaza,’ remembers his daughter, Lisa, “meeting dignitaries, sneaking into rehearsals, trying on costumes, running the elevator. We often fell asleep on the couch in Dad’s office, books open on our laps.”

It was a family affair, with Karen VanderKloot DiChiera, herself a composer, educator and stage



Karen Vanderkloot DiChiera, David DiChiera, Lisa DiChiera (left front) and Christina DiChiera (right front) in a 1970s family portrait.

Resourceful Leader

David DiChiera had become an admired and respected leader in regional opera by the time he was tapped to serve as President of OPERA America, the national association of professional opera companies. He served in this position from 1979 to 1983, expanding his purview from one opera company to opera organizations nationwide.

When DiChiera assumed leadership of the organization, there were essentially no new operas produced on America's opera stages (MOT was the exception with "Washington Square.") Under his aegis, OPERA America sponsored two programs: Opera for the '80s and Beyond, which developed innovative methods of encouraging and funding new American musical theater works, and Opera for a New America, which supported companies in their efforts to reach previously underserved segments of the population.

These initiatives were so successful that by the middle of the 1990s, 20 to 25 new works were being consistently produced on the stages of America's opera companies.

A Historic Achievement

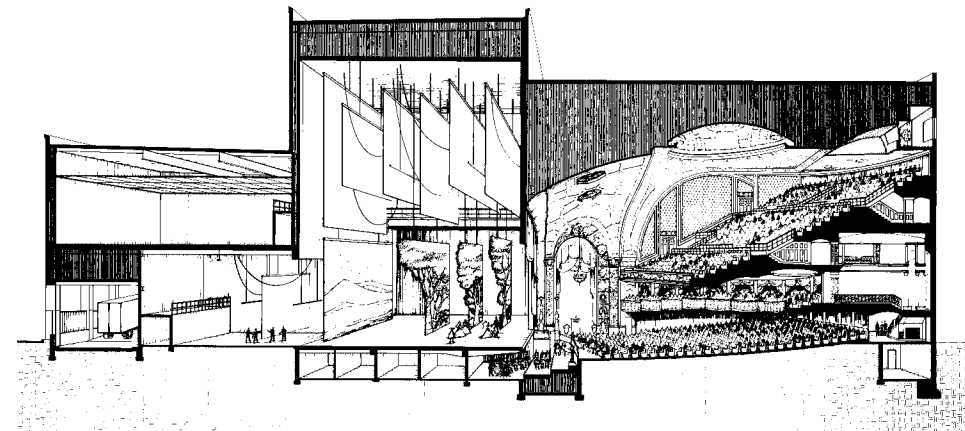
DiChiera's talent did not go unnoticed and he soon received a number of invitations to lead other companies. In 1981, he was appointed artistic director of Ohio's Dayton Opera Association, greatly increasing tickets sales, raising the company's artistic standards and earning favorable critical reviews.

DiChiera's reputation as an artistic director who was willing to experiment and extend the aesthetic encounters of his audiences would bring a third company under his wing in 1986, when he became the founding general director of Opera Pacific in Orange County. "He took this job when we had no money in the bank and no staff, and built a very successful opera company here," recalls then Opera Pacific board member Tom Hammond.

DiChiera remained with Dayton Opera until 1992 and Opera Pacific until 1996, when he resigned to devote more time to the opening of the Detroit Opera House.

A New Cultural Landmark

The campaign to create a permanent home with a stage large enough for the grandest of opera productions began in 1989, when Michigan Opera Theatre purchased the Robert's Fur building next to the former Capitol Theatre on Grand Circus Park.



Architectural renderings of the proposed design for state-of-the-art performing, rehearsal and set building facilities at the new Detroit Opera House.

MOT's new home would not be ready for six more years, opening with full fanfare in April 1996 as Dame Joan Sutherland cut the ribbon on the 2,700 seat building. The opening of the Detroit Opera House upon the occasion of MOT's 25th Anniversary was a historic event for the Motor City, the pinnacle of a crusade by MOT's supporters and the city's arts activists, and an epic achievement for the man who, according to his daughters, "lives, breathes, eats and sleeps opera."

Joanne Danto, one of the prime benefactors of MOT's Dance Program recalls the opening as "spectacular, an amazing day in this city. It was the beginning of an era for all of us who love David and wanted to see this opera house succeed. It's not just an opera house, it's an icon for strength and survival, for expression and freedom, for the way the city can reinvent itself."

A Reflection of the Community

DiChiera has oft been quoted in his belief that "opera's an art form that speaks to everyone, and if it does, then you have to find ways that everybody can feel as if they can access it as well."

Under David DiChiera's artistic direction, Michigan Opera Theatre expanded its traditional operatic repertoire to celebrate ethnicities and nationalities and build bridges into the various communities of southeastern Michigan.

Throughout MOT's history, Detroiters flocked to productions of the Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess," Scott Joplin's "Treemonisha," and the North American premieres of the Polish "King Roger" and "Anoush,"

the national opera of Armenia. Detroit's growing Latino community will be celebrated in the coming production of "Frieda," an opera about Mexican painter and cultural icon, Frieda Kahlo. An opera centering around Arab Americans (whose metro Detroit community is one the nation's largest) and their experience is in the planning stages.

Perhaps no aspect of DiChiera's reputation in the opera world exceeds his advocacy of minorities. He has been an industry leader in color-blind casting, helping advance the careers of sopranos Kathleen Battle, Maria Ewing, Leona Mitchell and tenor Vinson Cole. He commissioned and staged "Margaret

Garner," an opera by Richard Danielpour and Toni Morrison based on a true slave story set in pre-Civil War America, which became the first world premiere on the Detroit Opera House stage in 2005. The work reverberated not only in Detroit but also in communities across the country.

The Composer Returns

"When did he ever have any time of serenity to compose a work of such beauty and maturity?" was

a question an opera lover could ask when DiChiera's full-length grand opera, "Cyrano," made its debut on the stage of the Detroit Opera House in 2007. Artist and fellow virtuoso Glen Michaels still marvels at DiChiera's compositional triumph, saying, "David surprised everyone with 'Cyrano' when it premiered. It was simply stunning."

DiChiera had composed music since his teens, writing his "Four Sonnets" for voice and piano in his 20s. Composition had long taken a back seat to artistic administration when longtime friend, director



The great American mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves in the title role during the 2005 world premiere of "Margaret Garner" at the Detroit Opera House.

"Every art form, be it opera, theater, dance, or symphonic music, can remain viable if it continues to be enriched by new works. We take for granted the hundreds of films produced yearly, and know that of these one or two will probably emerge as cinematic masterpieces. The hundred operas that have survived and become the standard repertoire represent thousands that have been composed in order to accommodate that narrow selectivity. And so it must be in the 20th century. We must seek to provide for the birth of many new operas."



Clockwise, from the left: the composer at work in the grand salon of his Detroit home; photos of family, friends and colleagues; Dame Joan Sutherland and DiChiera after her swan song performance of "Norma"; photos of celebrities in DiChiera's Detroit Opera House office include Bette Davis, Martha Graham, and Sammy Davis Jr. with wife Altovise; the 1994 MOT Opera Ball at the Detroit Opera House.

chairs, a massive desk, piano, books, hundreds of musical scores, celebrity photos, sculpture, posters, mementoes, kitchen and dining table, it has been more of a home to DiChiera than his art-filled palazzo in Detroit's Palmer Woods. "It's like my house," he says softly.



DiChiera is actively involved in the search for new talent to carry on his legacy at MOT, more than ready to embrace a future devoted to his personal creative ambitions. There will be a new opera. New compositions for orchestra and voice have been drafted. "Change is part of life, you know," says DiChiera.

And he will make the change, as did his hero Cyrano, with "mon panache." "It means my achievements, my courage in life, the way I behave, my way of being with people, my creativity, my invention," says Bernard Uzan. "It goes very, very well with David."

"How many people get to see their biggest dream, their grandest vision in life fulfilled?" asks longtime MOT board member Betty Brooks. "David DiChiera did. And we are all the richer for it." 🍷



Bernard Uzan, approached David with the idea of composing the score for the libretto he had written, based on the classic tale of Cyrano de Bergerac.

"I knew he was a great composer and this story would suit his lush, romantic style," says Uzan. "He trusted me and he was ready to do it. In life, whenever we make a big decision, there is never one reason, there are always a multiplicity of reasons and such was the case with David, at that point in his life and work."



A fencing scene from "Cyrano," with baritone Marian Pop in the title role, 2007.

the production "in a very tough economy."

"Cyrano" was a success in Detroit, and in Florida and Philadelphia as well, as "it really contains everything that people go to an opera production for," said Robert Heuer in 2011, then general and artistic director of the Florida Grand Opera. "It has absolutely gorgeous music for all the principals. The final score between Roxane and

Cyrano is extremely moving. I watched the premiere in Detroit and audiences were in tears."

Mon Panache

"Ritartando," to "gradually slow down" will not come easily to maestro DiChiera. "It will be an adjustment to stop with the general director duties, when I step down to artistic director in 2016. It will be hard to give up this office," he says, gazing around the spacious corner suite, a high-ceilinged space aglow with the morning light of its many oversized windows. Filled with couches, high-backed

David was 62 when "Cyrano" had its premiere in Detroit, an event occasioned through the intercession of MOT's board chairman, R. "Rick" Jamison Williams Jr., DiChiera had intended on producing the opera with another company, thinking it inappropriate for "me to run my own work." "I insisted it was a rare privilege, one that belonged to his hometown and his own company. Fortunately, he agreed with me," says Williams. Together, they raised \$1.5 million towards

Timeline of a Lifetime



Born in McKeesport, Pa.

1935

Awarded Fulbright scholarship for studies in Italy

1958

1956
Earned MA in composition from UCLA

1962
Earned Ph.D. in musicology from UCLA

Founder & General Director of Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT)

1971

1975
Founder and Director of Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Detroit

Named Chairman of the Board for OPERA America

1979

1981
Appointed Artistic Director of Dayton Opera (concurrent with MOT)

Founder and General Director of Opera Pacific (concurrent with MOT & Dayton Opera)

1986

1996
Championed the efforts that led to the opening of the Detroit Opera House, on the occasion of MOT's 25th anniversary



Awarded Bridge Builders honor by Partners for Livable Communities

2000

2005
Commissioned and premiered Richard Danielpour and Toni Morrison's "Margaret Garner" at MOT

Premiered his opera, "Cyrano," at MOT, with subsequent performances by Opera Philadelphia and Florida Grand Opera

2007

2010
Recognized by The National Endowment for the Arts for NEA Opera Honors

Named 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist

2013



HISTORY OF MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

BY TIMOTHY PAUL LENTZ, Ph.D.



Dinner onstage for MOT's annual Opera Ball, here set amidst the Egyptian splendor of "Aida."

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MOT has become the focal point of a cultural renaissance in Detroit." This quote from the *New York Daily News* appeared in 1976, just a few short years after the establishment of Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT). To all but a handful of people, it was almost inconceivable in the 1960s and early 1970s that Detroit could or would support, financially as well as emotionally, its own opera company. Yet MOT quickly gained a reputation as one of the nation's fastest-growing and most innovative regional opera companies and, eventually, one of the country's premiere producers of opera and musical theater. **It all began in 1943, when the Detroit Grand Opera Association, a group of influential arts patrons and prominent civic leaders, brought the Philadelphia La Scala Opera Company to town. The company would continue to visit Detroit for eight seasons, followed by several seasons of the New York City Opera. In 1957, faced with declining attendance, the association, led by grand opera champion Frank Donovan and with the support of Anne McDonald Ford, decided to bring the prestigious Metropolitan Opera (Met) Tour to Detroit. The first of many years of Met tours to Detroit began in May 1959. As chairwoman of the association's volunteer committee, Ford built a strong organization that included an education committee, chaired by Jennie Jones. The education committee's purpose was to develop interest in opera among school-age children and college students, offer lower-priced tickets and generally promote the Met productions. As part of this effort, in 1961 Jones created Overture to Opera to perform excerpts from each season's upcoming Met productions at various locations in metropolitan Detroit. At each Overture to Opera performance, a panel would discuss and interpret scenes that the audience was about to see.**

Overture to Opera years

1961-1971



David DiChiera was an assistant professor of music at Oakland University in 1963, when he was asked to become director of Overture to Opera. DiChiera was fresh out of the music school's doctoral program at the University of California at Los Angeles and had only one year of teaching under his belt. Yet, in that short time he caught the attention of Virginia Yntema, general chairwoman of the Detroit Grand Opera Association, who suggested he take charge of Overture because of his expertise and enthusiasm in discussing the opera performances as an Education Committee panelist. He served as producer-director of Overture to Opera for nine seasons, laying the groundwork, securing financial support and establishing the reputation that would lead to the founding of Michigan Opera Theatre.

DiChiera had come to Oakland University because the university itself was new and he saw a compelling opportunity to build its music program. While directing Overture to Opera in the mid-1960s he was instrumental in launching the university's major cultural offerings, the Meadow Brook Music Festival and Meadow Brook Theatre. It was the building of an opera company, however, that was to hold his primary interest.

DiChiera's first three seasons with Overture were, as planned, programs of scenes from the operas the Met would perform in its annual Detroit season. In an approach very much like Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts, DiChiera would introduce the works to the audience and discuss relevant opera and music history. Although the Detroit Grand Opera Association thought of Overture as its educational and promotional arm for the Met productions, DiChiera saw it as a chance to develop something that belonged to the city. For a 1982 article in *The Ann Arbor News*, he recalled, "Detroit was the fifth-largest city in the nation and the only major city without an opera company.

I couldn't accept that fact; I knew the constituency for it was here." In addition, he was committed to the idea that the future of opera in America was the continued growth of regional companies.

In 1967 he expanded the format of Overture to include a complete opera, the Michigan premiere of Cherubini's one-act "The Portuguese Inn." That year Collins George, music critic for the *Detroit Free Press*, expressed the public's growing enthusiasm:

The verve, the spirit with which everything is presented, the way the company can capture and project a dramatic movement; in general, the high level of competence of the performances make them worthwhile. ... The real lesson of the Overture company is that there is a place in Detroit for an operatic stock company. ... Thanks must be expressed to DiChiera for this awakening to awareness of opera of such a large segment of the population.

In 1970, Overture produced its first full-length opera, Rossini's "The Barber of Seville." It starred Maria Ewing in her professional debut and was directed by and featured Italo Tajo, the renowned bass and star of the Met and Milan's La Scala. The season also included performances at the Detroit Institute of Arts, with a full orchestra. Overture to Opera had evolved into a full-fledged opera company – one now in search of a home.

Overture's founding members became the new opera company's first board of directors. Lynn Townsend, chairman of Chrysler Corp., had served as the Overture program's board chairman and continued to lead the opera company as chairman until 1980, when he passed the baton to Robert Dewar, chairman of Kmart Corp.



MOT's Chairmen of the Board. Left, Robert Dewar (1980-2000) and wife Nancy; right, Lynn Townsend (1971-1980) with wife Ruth.

19 | DAVID DICHIERA 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist

Music Hall Years

1972-1983

With productions that included the Michigan premieres of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" and Puccini's "La Rondine," Overture to Opera ended its 10 nomadic years in 1971 with its first season in the Music Hall. Locating the opera on Madison Avenue in downtown Detroit was the spark that ignited the rebirth of the city's theater and entertainment district; DiChiera and his young opera company were the first to commit to downtown and reinvest in a district that had seen many years of serious decline. It was a significant moment in the history of Detroit.



Cleo Laine as Desire Armfeldt in MOT's 1983 production of Stephen Sondheim's "A Little Night Music."

In 1972 the fledgling company was accepted into OPERA America, the national organization for opera companies. That year, an eclectic main-stage season included works by Mozart, Menotti and Puccini. Education and outreach activities continued, notably with the creation of an Opera in Residence; Michigan communities were now able to host the company for a week of opera experiences that included classes, workshops and a full production featuring members of the community performing alongside opera professionals. Karen VanderKloot DiChiera, DiChiera's then wife, directed the company's outreach and education activities. Her leadership proved to be key to building and sustaining an audience for the regional opera company and was an invaluable contribution to the character and strength of a company that was garnering national recognition for its unique and varied programming.

In 1973 the company changed its name from Overture to Michigan Opera Theatre. The new name reflected the company's mandate to serve the entire state and give equal emphasis to the operatic repertory and classic American musical theater, a dual purpose that was a novel concept at the time.

The opera company had finally found a comfortable home in Music Hall, but the building's future was by no means secure. To protect the structure from possible demolition, a group of volunteers established the Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts. DiChiera was its executive director, running the opera company from offices on one floor of the Music Hall and the nonprofit center from another.

Wearing two hats (for the first of many times) agreed with DiChiera and both organizations. In May 1976 the entertainment journal *Variety* wrote:

The flourishing of Michigan Opera Theatre and Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts is due to the efforts of a great many interested people, but no one doubts that the prime mover in what is happening in Detroit is 39-year-old David DiChiera. Because of DiChiera, Detroiters now have a spread of theater, music, dance, opera, pop and ethnic entertainment. DiChiera is doing what, three years ago, was thought impossible — he is bringing Detroiters back downtown at night, in droves, and he is garnering a portfolio of excellent reviews.

The Music Hall years were filled with artistic successes for which MOT quickly established a reputation as a company of distinction. It stepped into the national limelight when it commissioned and produced the world premiere of Thomas Pasatieri's "Washington Square," starring Catherine Malfitano. A 1976 *Time* magazine article observed, "Nothing testifies to the growing up of a regional American opera company quite like a world premiere." *The Christian Science Monitor* dubbed MOT "Detroit's Showcase"; *Variety*



Clockwise from top left: DiChiera outside Music Hall with Leona Mitchell, "Bess" in MOT's 1975 production of "Porgy and Bess"; in Flint schools as part of MOT's community outreach program, 1976; MOT's early home, Music Hall; MOT board President Lynn Townsend (left), General Director DiChiera and the cast of "La Traviata" receive a Michigan Opera Theatre Day proclamation from Detroit Mayor Coleman Young in 1976.





In its dedication to the production of American operas, MOT presented Aaron Copland's "The Tender Land" in 1976. DiChiera reviews the score with Copland and choreographer Eugene Loring (left).

declared the "Washington Square" premiere "a first for Michigan Opera Theatre and a milestone for Detroit and Michigan." *Opera News* praised MOT as "a triumph of regional opera."

Other highlights of the company's main-stage Music Hall performances included

- the professional operatic debut of soprano Kathleen Battle,
- the revival, telecast and ensuing Broadway run of "The Most Happy Fella,"
- actor Sal Mineo's directorial debut, with Menotti's "The Medium," in which he also played Toby,
- the national telecast of Aaron Copland's "The Tender Land," conducted by the composer himself,
- the American opera debut of Cleo Laine, in "The Merry Widow,"
- Catherine Malfitano's first "La Traviata."

Its presentation of the Polish opera "The Haunted Castle" and the Armenian opera "Anoush" distinguished MOT as one of the first companies to present major premieres of national operas that reflected the makeup of the community. Further national recognition came from mounting important revivals of such American works as George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess," Marc Blitzstein's "Regina," Scott Joplin's "Treemonisha" and Louis Gruenberg's "The Emperor Jones." Fully 25 percent of the company's main-stage productions were devoted to opera and musical theater works by American composers.

In 1979 DiChiera was named a Michiganian of the Year by *The Detroit News* and was elected president of OPERA America, a post he held for four years. In 1985 DiChiera was named general director of California's Opera Pacific; its first performance season that year was on the stage of the new Orange County Performing Arts Center. Now, as general director of the two companies and artistic director of Dayton

Opera (a position he held from 1981 to 1991), DiChiera could essentially collaborate with himself, sharing the artistic resources and leveraging the financial resources of all three institutions for

considerable savings and higher-quality productions. The unique, tri-company framework DiChiera created was regarded as a formula for the future of opera production.

In 1983, after extensive strategic planning, MOT announced it would broaden the scope of the company by producing large-scale grand opera at the Masonic Temple Theatre along with the offerings at Music Hall. In 1984 following the Met's spring tour, MOT produced its first grand opera in the Masonic Temple, Donizetti's "Anna Bolena"; it featured a cast of international stars including soprano Dame Joan Sutherland and conductor Richard Bonyng, the then-unknown Ben Heppner and the Midwest premiere of English surtitles.

In spring 1985 the Detroit Grand Opera Association announced it would no longer bring the Met to Detroit; MOT was ready and able to produce grand opera on the same scale. The 1985 and 1986 seasons returned to the Masonic Temple for Verdi's "Aida" starring Leona Mitchell in her first performance in the title role, followed by Bulgarian soprano Ghenia Dimitrova in Puccini's "Turandot." These productions marked the beginning of a new era for MOT.

Fisher/Masonic Years

1985-1995



Above, left: Dame Joan Sutherland and DiChiera toast her final performance of Bellini's "Norma," 1989. Top, right: World famous Bulgarian soprano Ghenia Dimitrova with David DiChiera in Detroit for her 1986 starring role of "Turandot." Below: DiChiera with Edie Adams, right, after her 1988 performance in "Follies."

Michigan Opera Theatre celebrated its 15th season in 1985 by moving to the Fisher Theatre for its fall presentations. The decision to leave the Music Hall was a difficult one for DiChiera and the board of directors, but the move was a necessary part of the plans for the company's growth. MOT now had two stages: the 2,100-seat Fisher Theatre and the 4,000-seat Masonic Temple. That year it mounted the first American opera production of Bernstein's "West Side Story," which enjoyed an extended run; presented its first full grand-opera season at the Masonic Temple and earned its rank as one of the top 10 opera companies in the United States based on its operating budget.

During the 1987-88 season, with a budget topping \$5 million and subscribers numbering more than 9,000, MOT launched its biggest season ever, highlighted by the historic Detroit concert debut of Luciano Pavarotti to a full house at Joe Louis Arena, the 20,066-seat hockey arena. The 1988-89 season opened with MOT's 500th public performance and concluded



as the sixth consecutive year in the black. It featured Douglas Moore's "The Ballad of Baby Doe," presented for the first time in 28 years, and the Detroit premiere of Stephen Sondheim's "Follies," starring Juliet Prowse, Edie Adams and Nancy Dussault.

Michigan Opera Theatre commissioned a new production of Bellini's "Norma" in 1989 from English theater artist John Pascoe for Dame

Joan Sutherland's final performances of the role, a production that garnered the company its first NPR broadcast. That same season, MOT added classical ballet to its programming with a production of "Swan Lake" starring Cynthia Gregory. The combined audiences for main-stage and outreach programs that season exceeded 230,000. In 1990 MOT mounted a revival of "Show Boat" and produced its first-ever Richard Strauss opera, "Ariadne auf Naxos," starring soprano Alessandra Marc. It also unveiled a new production of Mozart's "Don Giovanni" designed and directed by John Pascoe, which along with Pascoe's production of "Norma" was shared with Opera Pacific and Dayton Opera. *Continued on page 30*

Setting Stories to Song in MOTown

Under the direction of David DiChiera, Michigan Opera Theatre has become one of the most respected opera companies in the world, with a repertory ranging from grand opera to operatic productions of musical theater. Below, a reader's guide to MOT's most significant productions.

Right: A graphic representation of Michigan Opera Theatre's most popular productions, with Puccini's "Madame Butterfly" on stage at the Detroit Opera House a record nine times.



The Abduction From the Seraglio

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart blends high comedy with touching tragedy in this wild story of two men rescuing their lovers from a pasha's harem.



Anna Bolena

Gaetano Donizetti's tragic opera takes place in England during the early 16th century, focusing on the dramatic story of the most famous of Henry VIII's six wives.



The Ballad of Baby Doe

Douglas Moore's opera is one of the few American operas to be in the standard repertory. The work is based on the lives of actual historical figures Horace Tabor, Elizabeth "Baby" Doe Tabor and Augusta Tabor, and follows their scandal-plagued story from Colorado's silver mines to Washington's populist politics at the end of the 19th century.



Boris Godunov

Modest Mussorgsky's only completed opera takes place at the end of the 16th century in Russia, where the reluctant tsar confronts his own dark past and the trials and loneliness of power.*



Aida

A bitter love triangle plays itself out against a backdrop of war and cultural oppression in ancient Egypt in this compelling tale of conflicting loyalties and forbidden passion. Spectacular pageantry and emotional intimacy are brilliantly balanced in Giuseppe Verdi's grandest of grand operas.



Anoush

The first opera inspired by Armenian folk music and culture, Armen Tigranian's work centers around the tragedy of a peasant girl (Anoush) whose short love affair ends in loss and death because of conflict between her lover (Saro) and her brother (Mossy).



The Barber of Seville

With the help of a wily barber, a strong-willed young woman outwits a lecherous old man in this sparkling comedy. Gioachino Rossini's witty heroine, the feisty Rosina, steals the show.

Brundibár
Jewish Czech composer Hans Krása's dramatic children's opera uses fairy tale elements to tell the story of a sister and brother who manage to outwit the title character, an evil organ grinder, and sing in the market square to earn money for their ill mother. The opera was originally performed by children in the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia.



Carmen

Georges Bizet's gypsy antiheroine (based on the title character of Prosper Mérimée's novella) collects and discards men without care, abandoning the besotted soldier Don José in favor of the handsome bullfighter Escamillo, with tragic results.



A Little Night Music

Stephen Sondheim's musical, inspired by director Ingmar Bergman's film "Smiles of a Summer Night," visits the romantic lives of several couples on a single evening. The musical features the beloved "Send In the Clowns."



Ariadne auf Naxos

High and low art compete to capture the public's attention in this comedic opera, set to consummately beautiful music by Richard Strauss.



La Boheme

Giacomo Puccini's bittersweet favorite examines the fleeting nature of life, love and happiness through a series of short scenes — student Rodolfo and consumptive seamstress Mimi fall in love, but the relationship breaks down due to his jealousy. Only as she dies do they fully understand each other's true worth.

PERFORMED 9 TIMES

Madame Butterfly

PERFORMED 7 TIMES

The Barber of Seville • La Boheme • Tosca

PERFORMED 6 TIMES

La Traviata • Carmen • The Marriage of Figaro

PERFORMED 5 TIMES

Porgy and Bess • The Magic Flute • Aida

PERFORMED 4 TIMES

The Pearl Fishers • Lucia di Lammermoor • Faust • Don Giovanni • Turandot • Die Fledermaus • Rigoletto

PERFORMED 3 TIMES

The Elixir of Love • The Mikado • The Merry Widow • Pagliacci • Amahl and the Night Visitors • Il Trovatore

PERFORMED 2 TIMES

Fidelio • Humper • The Portuguese Inn • Margaret Garner • The Daughter of the Regiment • The Pirates of Penzance • Romeo and Juliet • Show Boat • The Medium • La Rondine • Samson and Delilah • A Little Night Music • Salome • Anoush • Falstaff • Così fan tutte

PERFORMED 1 TIME

Candide • Mass • West Side Story • La Sonnambula • Regina • Der Jasager • The Seven Deadly Sins • Peter Grimes • The Tender Land • Lakme • Cyrano • Anna Bolena • Don Pasquale • Rita • Of Mice and Men • Man of La Mancha • The Most Happy Fella • Treemonisha • Hansel and Gretel • The Emperor Jones • Jullius Caesar • Dead Man Walking • Naughty Marietta • The Perfect Fool • Manon • Werther • Help, Help The Goblins • The Consul • The Telephone • The Haunted Castle • The Ballad of Baby Doe • The Abduction from the Seraglio • Boris Godunov • Orpheus in the Underworld • Tales of Hoffman • Carmelita Burana • Washington Square • Gianni Schicchi • My Fair Lady • The Sound of Music • The Student Prince • Cinderella • Orlando • Kismet (Adapted from Alexander Borodin) • Martha • The Flying Dutchman • A Masked Ball • Joan of Arc • Nabucco • Othello • Eugene Onegin • King Roger • Singers • A Soldier's Tale • L'histoire du Soldat • Arldne and Naros • Der Rosenkavalier • Follies • Side by Side by Sondheim • Sweeney Todd • El Capitan • The Music Man • Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat • Les Misérables



Così fan tutte

Mozart's operatic masterpiece is the tale of two young soldiers who disguise their identities to test their lovers' fidelity in a sublime and sometimes startling mix of hilarious farce and poignant drama.*



Dead Man Walking

Jake Heggie's contemporary work recounts the true story of the relationship between a Catholic nun, Sister Helen Prejean, and the convicted rapist and double murderer Joseph De Rocher, before he was executed by the state of Louisiana.



The Elixir of Love

Donizetti spins a gentle romantic comedy out of the story of the simple peasant Nemorino, who is tricked into buying up bottles of cheap liquor as a guaranteed love potion but in the end has the last laugh.



Falstaff

Based on Shakespeare's "The Merry Wives of Windsor" and "Henry IV," Verdi's last opera is a wise, wistful comedy about a self-deluded old man who vainly attempts to seduce two women at once.



Cyrano

David DiChiera's grand romantic opera is based on Edmond Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac," the French soldier doomed to an unrequited love for his distant cousin, Roxane.



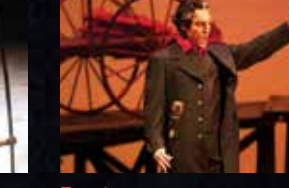
Die Fledermaus

An 1875 farce full of waltzes and unforgettable melodies by Johann Strauss II, this Viennese operetta is the ultimate tale of bad behavior and marital infidelity.



The Emperor Jones

Set on an unnamed island in the West Indies, Louis Gruenberg's opera tells the story of Brutus Jones, a former Pullman porter and ex-convict who escaped to the island, set himself up as its tyrannical "emperor" and became rich by exploiting the natives — who eventually revolt against him.



Faust

In Charles Gounod's 1859 grand opera, inspired by Goethe, the old philosopher Faust tries to recover his youth via a doomed pact with the devil, Mephistopheles.*



The Daughter of the Regiment

A tomboy, unable to transform into a snooty duchess, finds true love anyway in Donizetti's comic opera.



Don Giovanni

Mozart's bold, beguiling blend of comedy and drama tells the tale of a proud, predatory nobleman and the women who are drawn to him.



Eugene Onegin

Peter Tchaikovsky's opera, based on the Alexander Pushkin story, focuses on the hopeless, youthful passion of Tatyana for the title character. Onegin carelessly rejects her and then, too late, awakens to her love.*



The Flying Dutchman

The Norwegian coast is the setting for Richard Wagner's opera, the saga of an ancient sea captain condemned to sail his phantom ship throughout eternity unless he finds a faithful wife to release the curse.



Follies

Stephan Sondheim's bittersweet musical reunion of aging showgirls as they make a final pilgrimage to the grand theater that once gave them wings. Two couples – Buddy and Sally Durant Plummer, and Benjamin and Phyllis Rogers Stone – who are attending the reunion, are the focus of the story.



The Haunted Castle

Stanislaw Moniuszko's comic, romantic opera has strong Polish patriotic undertones, which has made it one of the country's most beloved musical works.



King Roger

Set in 12th century Sicily, Polish composer Karol Szymanowski's 20th-century opera concerns the enlightenment of the Christian King Roger II by a young shepherd who represents pagan ideals.



Lucia di Lammermoor

Young, unstable Lucy Ashton is coerced into marrying a man she does not love and stabs him to death on their wedding night. The most famous "mad scene" in all of opera is the highlight of Donizetti's bodice-ripper, based on Walter Scott's melodrama.



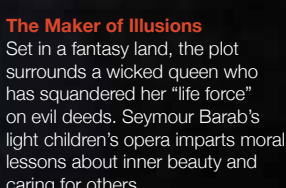
Madame Butterfly

A heartbreaking tale of innocence, betrayal and sacrifice unfolds in Puccini's classic work as the Japanese geisha Butterfly falls victim to an American lieutenant's reckless passion.



The Magic Flute

Mozart's famous opera represents a search for truth and wisdom, with a plot akin to a fairy tale: A noble prince is ordered by the mysterious Queen of the Night to rescue a beautiful princess who has been kidnapped.



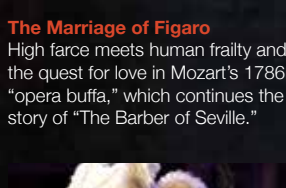
The Maker of Illusions

Set in a fantasy land, the plot surrounds a wicked queen who has squandered her "life force" on evil deeds. Seymour Barab's light children's opera imparts moral lessons about inner beauty and caring for others.



Margaret Garner

The distinctly American story of a slave who chooses to kill her own daughter rather than turn her over to bondage is by Richard Danielpour and Toni Morrison.



The Marriage of Figaro

High farce meets human frailty and the quest for love in Mozart's 1786 "opera buffa," which continues the story of "The Barber of Seville."



A Masked Ball

Verdi's king is conspired against and ultimately betrayed by his most-trusted friend.



The Medium

Baba, who as "Madame Flora" conducts bogus séances with her daughter and a gypsy deaf-mute named Toby to extract money from bereaved parents, is at the center of Gian Carlo Menotti's short, dark opera.



The Merry Widow

Franz Lehár's operetta is set in 1900s Paris, where a rich widow and her countrymen attempt to keep her money in her home principality of Pontevedria by finding her the right husband.



Manon

Jules Massenet's best-known opera contains a remarkable portrait of Manon, as she grows from wide-eyed innocence to a guilty womanhood.



The Most Happy Fella

Frank Loesser's heart-warming musical of the unlikely romance between aging Italian fruit grower Tony and the waitress Rosabella, whom he courts by post and, during his convalescence after a car accident, wins through his sincerity.



Nabucco

Verdi's opera follows the plight of the Jews as they are assaulted, conquered and subsequently exiled from their homeland by the Babylonian king Nabucco (Nebuchadnezzar).



Norma

Set in 50 B.C. Gaul, Bellini's greatest tragic opera centers around the love between the daughter of a high priest and a Roman proconsul. Norma's first-act prayer to the moon, "Casta diva" (chaste goddess), is one of the greatest bel canto arias of all time.



Pagliacci

Pagliacci is the famous play-within-a-play where the clown who makes others laugh is sobbing inside because onstage and off, his actress-wife is having a torrid affair with a younger man. Ruggero Leoncavallo based his realistic opera on an incident in the Calabrian village of Montalto, where the subsequent trial had been before his father as magistrate.*



Porgy and Bess

Crown, a murderous local thug, keeps Bess by his side through intimidation and his own sexual prowess. Bess falls for the good-hearted Porgy, but in the end can't resist the "happy dust" of dope-peddling Sportin' Life. Porgy, the lame beggar who's the strongest of them all, reigns as an indomitable spirit determined to do whatever it takes to reclaim the woman he loves, in George Gershwin's classic work.

The Portuguese Inn

Luigi Cherubini's one-act comic opera of runaway lovers and mistaken identity premiered in Paris in 1798.



Romeo and Juliet

Gounod's 1867 opera is based on Shakespeare's play about the two star-crossed young lovers, highlighted by Juliet's brilliant waltz, "Je veux vivre."



Regina

Based on the heroine of Lillian Hellman's play "The Little Foxes," Marc Blitzstein's opera tells of the struggle for control of a family business.



Rigoletto

Playboy duke seduces and abandons pretty virgin. When her hunchbacked father, the duke's jester, seeks vengeance, it backfires horribly. One of the best known of Verdi's operas, "La donna è mobile" ("Woman is Fickle") is the most famous of its arias.



La Rondine

The sparkle and glamour of Paris' Banquet Years provide the glorious backdrop for Puccini's romantic tale of love won and lost.



Salome

Richard Strauss's one-act opera is based on the play by Oscar Wilde. The teenage Salome lusts for Jokanaan (John the Baptist). Her stepfather, Herod, forces her to dance for him – the Dance of the Seven Veils – and she demands the prophet's head on a plate in return.



Samson and Delilah

Based on the Old Testament story, this is the only opera by Camille Saint-Saëns that is regularly performed.



Show Boat

A true classic of American musical theater, Jerome Kern's tale of life on the Mississippi from the 1880s to the 1920s is both a poignant love story and a powerful reminder of the bitter legacy of racism.



Side by Side by Sondheim

A musical revue of composer Stephen Sondheim's favorite themes and best-loved songs. Its title is derived from the song "Side by Side" from "Company."



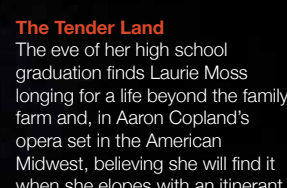
La Sonnambula

Amina is a delicate, sweet village girl whose sleepwalking confuses the locals into thinking she's unfaithful to her fiancé. Of course, she's exonerated and all ends happily in this masterpiece for the bel canto soprano by Vincenzo Bellini.



The Tales of Hoffmann

An eccentric writer tells the stories of his great failed romances in this opera fantastique by Jacques Offenbach.



The Tender Land

The eve of her high school graduation finds Laurie Moss longing for a life beyond the family farm and, in Aaron Copland's opera set in the American Midwest, believing she will find it when she elopes with an itinerant farm hand who has captured her heart.



Tosca

Puccini's masterwork is a melodrama set in Rome in June 1800, with the Kingdom of Naples' control of Rome threatened by Napoleon's invasion of Italy. A tragic tale of jealousy, love and loss, the beloved opera is full of exquisite arias, with the moving "Vissi d'arte" perhaps the best known.



La Traviata

Violetta Valéry is a high-spirited but deceptively delicate woman who unexpectedly finds, and then selflessly gives up, the love of her all-too-short life. Based on the novel "The Lady of the Camellias" by Alexandre Dumas, fils, Verdi's "La Traviata" is the most performed opera in the world.



Treemonisha

The theme of Scott Joplin's opera is education as salvation, as represented by the heroine and symbolic educator Treemonisha.



Washington Square

The trysts and tribulations of first love take unexpected turns in Thomas Pasatieri's adaptation of the classic Henry James story.



Il Trovatore

Azucena is the mysterious gypsy driven to avenge her mother, who burned at the stake at the hands of the first Count di Luna. Manrico, her supposed son, is the fiery partisan troubadour. The current count is the dangerous commander of the royal forces. In Verdi's classic opera, both men love the same woman and one will murder the other – learning too late that he has executed his own brother.*



Werther

In Massenet's masterpiece, based on Goethe's "Sorrows of the Young Werther," tears never cease to flow from the moment the moonlight idyll is revealed and destroyed. Inspired by the true story of a suicide of a young man who was in love with a married woman.



Turandot

Ancient Peking is the backdrop for the mythical tale of the beautiful, bloodthirsty Princess Turandot. Resolved to never let a man possess her, she decrees that any suitor must answer three riddles or die. Puccini's final opera is also his most musically adventurous, boasting one of the world's most famous arias: "Nessun dorma."



West Side Story

Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim's masterpiece. Loosely based on Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" and set in the slums of New York City, the show used the juvenile gangs of local whites (the Jets) and immigrant Puerto Ricans (the Sharks) as the modern Montagues and Capulets. 📖

**This opera does not appear in Timothy Paul Lentz's "The History of Michigan Opera Theatre."*

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE PREMIERES

World

- 1976: "Washington Square" by Thomas Pasatieri
- 1978: "Singers" by Charles Strouse (Commissioned by MOT)
- 2005: "Margaret Garner" by Richard Danielpour
- 2007: "Cyrano" by David DiChiera

North American

- 1981: "Anoush" by Armen Tigranian

American

- 1982: "The Haunted Castle" (Straszny Dwor) by Stanislaw Monuszko
- 1992: "King Roger" by Karol Szymanowski (in Polish) American Premiere Original Language Production

Midwest

- 1969: "Der Jasager" (The Choice) by Berthold Brecht and Kurt Weill
- 1971: "Help, Help The Globolinks" by Gian Carlo Menotti
- 1975: "Mass" by Leonard Bernstein
- 1977: "Regina" by Marc Blitzstein

Michigan

- 1967: "The Portugese Inn" by Luigi Cherubini
- 1971: "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" by Andrew Lloyd Weber
- 1971: "La Rondine" (The Swallow) by Giacomo Puccini
- 1972: "The Perfect Fool" by Gustav Holst
- 1979: "The Emperor Jones" by Louis Gruenberg
- 1980: "Of Mice and Men" by Carlisle Floyd
- 1982: "Treemonisha" by Scott Joplin
- 2003: "Dead Man Walking" by Jake Heggie

Establishing a New Home

1990-1995

The move to the Fisher and Masonic theaters temporarily met the company's needs for greater technical resources, seating capacity and audience amenities. But the future of the opera company as a permanent resource for the city and state, as envisioned in the strategic plan developed by DiChiera and the board in the mid-1980s, depended on finding or creating — and controlling — a world-class facility to accommodate MOT's programming.



David DiChiera with soprano Carol Neblett at the 1987 MOT Opera Ball.

Sondheim," "The Music Man" and a sumptuous "Samson and Delilah," the highlight of the main-stage season was the American Midwest premiere of the Polish opera "King Roger," by Karol Szymanowski. The Polish community responded with an international outpouring of support.

Meanwhile, progress on the new opera house continued. The Roberts Fur Building on the Capitol Theatre block fell to the wrecking ball in spring 1993, making

way for a new, 75,000- square-foot stage house. Three other developments furthered the momentum:

- a \$1.25 million capital challenge grant from The Kresge Foundation,
- the acquisition of the last of the eight parcels in the Capitol Theatre block, and
- the 1994 Opera Ball, held inside the unrestored auditorium; it gave many of the guests their first look at the exquisite (yet dilapidated) interior.

Stage construction began in earnest during the summer; opera presentations that fall included "La Boheme," "The Barber of Seville," "The Merry Widow" and "Aida," starring Leona Mitchell.

The Masonic Temple and Fisher Theater years ended in spring 1995, a season that featured Pascoe's production of "Don Giovanni" with Metropolitan Opera stars Jeffrey Wells and Martile Rowland. A production of "Swan Lake," perhaps the most beloved ballet of all time, was choreographed by Detroit's own Jacob Lascu, and Puccini's "Tosca," starring Russian soprano Maria Guleghina, concluded the season.



In the late 1980s the company had seriously considered renovating the State Theatre, although the arrangement was not ideal because the facility was available only for rent, not for sale. In the midst of those discussions, the former Capitol Theatre became available for purchase. DiChiera considered the structure ideal because of its opera-house-style interior and surrounding real estate that offered space for a new stage house. He brought in facilities experts to examine the site; they confirmed its structural soundness, acoustical excellence and technical capabilities when properly updated. In 1989 the board secured the first parcel in the Capitol Theatre block. Philip E. Benton Jr., then president of Ford Motor Co., agreed to chair the Opera House Capital Campaign in 1990. Under his leadership MOT ran a successful campaign to name the private grand tier boxes; four years later, with the revenue raised by the campaign, the company was able to acquire the remaining parcels of the Capitol Theatre block.

In the fall of 1991 during a press conference prior to his return concert engagement, Luciano Pavarotti made a surprising promise: He would return to Detroit and perform at the opening of the new Detroit Opera House. The announcement brought the project to the attention of the wider public and provided a tremendous boost to the fundraising campaign.

In 1992, with a budget of \$5.4 million, MOT was cited by the Ford Foundation as one of the most fiscally responsible arts organizations in the country. Along with "Lucia di Lammermoor," "Side by Side by

The Detroit Opera House

1996

The Detroit Opera House inaugural gala took place on April 21, 1996, with Pavarotti in performance — the legendary tenor sang the arias "Lamento di Federico" from "L'Arlesiana" and "E lucevan le stelle" from "Tosca" — at what was the most significant milepost in the history of Michigan Opera Theatre. The dream of a permanent home for opera in the city of Detroit had become a reality: Joan Sutherland declared the Detroit Opera House "open and ready for music."

The theater was comparable in function, size and aesthetics to the finest opera houses in the world and instantly became a cornerstone of cultural life for the city. Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, Michigan Gov. John Engler and President Bill Clinton joined in an international outpouring of support for the achievement. The opening of the opera house coincided with MOT's silver anniversary. Lotfi Mansouri, then general director of the San Francisco Opera and a friend and colleague of DiChiera's, wrote:

You have been a fantastic champion for opera in North America, David, with the commitment, dedication and talent to make the difference. Generations of opera audiences will reap the rewards of your hard work, and that is something to cherish.

The 25th anniversary spring season presented the first full opera on the Detroit Opera House stage, "La Boheme," starring Marcello Giordani and Helen Donath. It was followed by Sergei Prokofiev's ballet, "Romeo and Juliet," Verdi's "La Traviata" and Richard Strauss' "Salome," featuring Maria Ewing in the title role. The 1996 fall season, aptly named "Building on a Dream," included "Carmen" with MOT favorite Irina Mishura, a touring production of "West Side Story" and a new educational program, launched by Karen VanderKloot DiChiera, called Learning at the Opera House. It soon was winning national awards for its scope and content.

Michigan Opera Theatre offered its first dance season at the Detroit Opera House in 1997 with performances that included two special presentations by American



Above: David DiChiera and Karen VanderKloot DiChiera being filmed for local news coverage as the wrecking ball hits the Robert's Fur Building to make way for the new opera house. Below: "La Boheme," one of MOT's most popular productions. Left: DiChiera in front of the future Detroit Opera House.



MOT's Operetta Workshop is one of a number of popular education programs available to young people to learn acting, singing and dancing. Here, a scene from a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta.



American Ballet Theatre's "Swan Lake."

Ballet Theatre. In addition, there were Broadway touring productions of "A Chorus Line" and "Damn Yankees," featuring Jerry Lewis. The 1997 opera season was packed: "Aida"; "Rigoletto"; "The Marriage of Figaro"; MOT's first Wagner opera, "The Flying Dutchman"; and "The Magic Flute," complete with set and costume design by Maurice Sendak. Conductors Steven Mercurio, Klaus Donath and John Mauceri were featured at the podium. With spectacular programming, MOT was firmly ensconced in its new home.

The spring season in 1998 opened with MOT's first-ever staging of Massenet's "Manon," featuring Marcello Giordani and Ruth Ann Swenson, followed by Donizetti's "The Elixir of Love" and Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess," starring Gordon Hawkins and Marquita Lister. Having been one of the first opera companies to produce "Porgy and Bess" in 1975, MOT presented a new production in 1998; throughout its history the company has been a leader in seeking out and introducing African American operatic talent. Cleo Laine; the sopranos Kathleen Battle, Leona Mitchell and Wilhelmenia Fernandez; baritone Gregg Baker and tenor Vinson Cole were a few of MOT's featured artists.

"Porgy and Bess" was followed by productions of "Turandot" starring Richard Margison and Alessandra Marc and "Lucia di Lammermoor" starring Sumi Jo, Fernando de la Mora and Evgeny Dmitriev. Le Ballet de Monte Carlo presented "Romeo and Juliet"; a special treat was an appearance by the president of the company, H.S.H. Princess Caroline of Monaco.

Michigan Opera Theatre presented The Three Tenors — Pavarotti, Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras — in July 1999 at Detroit's historic Tiger Stadium, the celebrated trio's only North American appearance that year. The concert launched MOT's New Century

Fund and provided the opportunity to raise the first \$14 million. Superstar tenor Andrea Bocelli made his North American opera debut at the Detroit Opera House later that year in Massenet's "Werther," the first American production to be webcast.

The company marked its 30th anniversary season in 2001 in the top 10 of American opera companies, by virtue of MOT's now \$12 million budget. A yearlong celebration of Giuseppe Verdi was highlighted by presentations of "La Traviata," one of his most famous works, and "Falstaff," his final opera. The fall season also included a revival of the Armenian national opera "Anoush," which had its American premiere on the MOT stage in 1982. The production received an outpouring of financial support from the Armenians for "Anoush" Committee and the hundreds of Armenians and friends who contributed their time and resources to the success of this production. The spring season came to a close with Offenbach's "The Tales of Hoffmann."

Renovation continued at the opera house, and 2002 marked the opening of the Cadillac Café, located at the Madison Street entrance; the pub-like bistro was opened to guests before curtain and after the performance. The year came to a close with a visit from the legendary Bolshoi Ballet, performing "Swan Lake," and Cincinnati Ballet's "The Nutcracker." The year would also see MOT's first production of "Too Hot to Handel," a jazz-gospel version of the classic "Messiah" performed by Detroit's Rackham Symphony Choir that has become a holiday tradition at the Detroit Opera House.

The Michigan premiere of the new American opera "Dead Man Walking," by Jake Heggie, was a notable production in 2003. London's *The Guardian* reported at the time that the new opera made "the most concentrated impact of any piece of American music



H.S.H. Princess Caroline of Monaco with David DiChiera in 2005, prior to Les Ballet de Monte Carlo's command performance of "Romeo and Juliet" at the Detroit Opera House.

theater since "West Side Story." The opera repertory also included John Pascoe's production of "Don Giovanni," conducted by Steven Mercurio, and "Die Fledermaus," directed by longtime company friend Bernard Uzan and conducted by MOT's own Suzanne Mallare Acton. There was also a "Madama Butterfly" as well as MOT's first production of Verdi's "A Masked Ball." Dance audiences enjoyed the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and a rare North American appearance by the Kirov Ballet: the MOT stage was the only one in Michigan large enough to accommodate the Russian company's performance.

2004 saw two major developments. The first was the completion of the Crowning Achievement Campaign, which allowed MOT to begin its final construction phase — the six-story parking center and the renovation of the office tower on the Broadway Street side of the Detroit Opera House. The second was the election of R. Jamison (Rick) Williams Jr. to serve as MOT's third chairman of the board of directors.

After six years of preparation, MOT hosted the world premiere of "Margaret Garner" on May 7, 2005, the first world premiere to be presented on the Detroit Opera House stage. The true story of a slave who chooses to kill her own daughter rather than turn

her over to bondage, by composer Richard Danielpour and Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, starred soprano Denyce Graves in the title role.

The 2005 opera season also included "Tosca," "The Daughter of the Regiment," "Norma" and a revival of "La Boheme." The Kirov Ballet returned with "The Sleeping Beauty," one of only three appearances in the United States. Michigan Opera Theatre and the city of Detroit also hosted OPERA America's Opera Conference 2005: Diverse Voices, welcoming the world's opera establishment to the restored Detroit Opera House and the city's many other treasures.

One of the highlights of 2006 was the opening of the Ford Center for Arts & Learning at the Detroit Opera House, a new space that enabled MOT to expand the Community Program and the Dance Department. The Ford Center, located on the Broadway side of the opera house, consists of the Chrysler Black Box Theater, a flexible performance space for intimate presentations; the Margo V. Cohen Center for Dance, the locus for all dance activities; the David and Marion Handleman Classroom Center; the Lee and Floy Barthel Costume Shop; and the Allesee Dance and Opera Resource Library.

Cyrano

2007



"Cyrano" in its Michigan Opera Theatre premiere, 2007.

The highlight of 2007 was MOT's third world premiere: the production of David DiChiera's magnum opus, "Cyrano." The grand romantic opera, with a libretto by longtime colleague Bernard Uzan, was a tour de force that inspired an outpouring of support and provided a smashing start to the season. The year also included "Turandot," MOT's first production of Mozart's "The Abduction From the Seraglio," Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet" and "The Marriage of Figaro." The season's dance card included appearances by American Ballet Theatre, Miami City Ballet and Ballet Folklórico de Mexico as well as the Grand Rapids Ballet's production of "Where the Wild Things Are."

The next year featured Michigan Opera Theatre's first production of Bellini's "La Sonnambula," Puccini's "La Rondine" and "Madama Butterfly," "La Traviata" and a return engagement of "Margaret Garner." Also notable in 2008 was MOT's newly formed Children's Chorus, which presented a full staging of the light children's opera "The Maker of Illusions." Chorus members gave concert performances and served as the in-house children's chorus for all main-stage production requirements.

The nationwide economic crisis that began in late 2008 along with the bankruptcies of General Motors and Chrysler — two major corporate supporters —

forced MOT to make a series of financial cutbacks. Most significant to the public was the reduction from five opera productions a season to four. The company soldiered on through 2009 with productions of "The Elixir of Love," the ever-popular "Carmen," Sondheim's "A Little Night Music" and a critically acclaimed production of Verdi's "Nabucco," an opera not seen in Detroit since 1961.

There also were return visits from American Ballet Theatre and Grand Rapids Ballet; the modern dance troupe Pilobolus performed at the opera house for the first time. "Too Hot To Handel" and "The Nutcracker" returned for the holidays and the Children's Chorus performed Jewish Czech composer Hans Krása's dramatic "Brundibár."

With the economy starting to show signs of life, MOT rode out the recession in 2010 by hunkering down to meet expense and revenue goals and continuing a reduced performance schedule. Cost-cutting trimmed MOT's budget from \$12.5 million to just under \$10 million, but the company was crippled by an \$18 million bond debt on the opera house and the parking center.

Securing the Future



Facing the probability of bankruptcy in December 2011, Michigan Opera Theatre reached agreement with its lenders to cut the company's long-term debt provided MOT pay \$11 million by June 30, 2012. The Preserve the Legacy Campaign was launched, raising \$7 million with which the company negotiated a new lease, paid off its lenders and attained financial stability. "I cannot overstate the importance of what we've just achieved," DiChiera said at the time.

With the economy beginning to improve and the company's restructured debt, DiChiera could look with optimism toward the future — one that had to include a retirement strategy and laying the groundwork for the next, financially stable, era of his beloved opera company.

"An Opera Hero Plans His Exit" was the headline in the *Detroit Free Press* on Feb. 3, 2013. After nearly 50 years at the helm, DiChiera announced his retirement.

He would transition into the position of artistic director and serve in this capacity until 2016 to assist the transition to a new opera director. Tributes began: The National Endowment for the Arts at the Kennedy Center awarded him its Opera Honors, the nation's most prestigious opera award.

In the fall of 1971, DiChiera and his young opera company planted the seed that produced the rebirth of Detroit's theater and entertainment district, one of the largest in the nation at the turn of the 20th century. Equally important were his efforts to present MOT performances that reflected its community, notably with the productions of "The Haunted Castle," "Anoush" and "Margaret Garner."

In the first era of the opera company, the names David DiChiera and Michigan Opera Theatre are nearly synonymous. He has been the heartbeat of opera in Detroit for nearly 50 years. ■

Luciano Pavarotti



Many of opera's superstars offered their talents in the support of David DiChiera and Michigan Opera Theatre, with none more generous than his great friends **Luciano Pavarotti** and **Dame Joan Sutherland**. Pavarotti was a major contributor to The Detroit Opera House Project, bringing the attention of the public to the project at large by promising to sing at the opening of the new opera house, donating large amounts of money to the cause, and by making various appearances around Detroit in performances designed to raise money for the project. Dame Sutherland officially opened the Detroit Opera House as she cut the ribbon at the Gala Performance on opening night.



Joan Sutherland



A Constellation of Stars

"As I think back over my 50 years of producing operas and musicals, I am flooded with memories of the incredible artists that I had the pleasure of working with, some wonderful and some less than easy to work with. But all in all, I wouldn't trade any of those memories for the thrill of working with the most exciting and talented artists in the world."

- David DiChiera

Sopranos

Jan Albright
Pamela Armstrong
Martina Arroyo
Ainhoa Arteta
Carmen Balthrop
Priscilla Baskerville
Kathleen Battle
Stefania Bonfadelli
Gwendolyn Bradley
Kathleen Brett
Angela Brown
Tiziana Caruso
Fiorenza Cedolins
Sharon Christman
Marianna Christos
Andriana Chuchman
Patricia Craig
Phyllis Curtin
Tracy Dahl
Lisa Daltroius
Doralene Davis
Guiping Deng
Mariella Devia
Ghena Dimitrova
Cristina Gallardo Domas
Helen Donath
Grazia Doronzio
Jenny Drivala
Jane Eaglen
Kallen Esperian
Maria Ewing
Tiziana Fabbri
Wilhelmina Fernandez
Elena Filipova
Renée Fleming
Robin Follman
Stephanie Friede
Mechthild Gessendorf
Barbara Gibson
Christine Goerke
Sheri Greenwald
Jan Grissom
Maria Guleghina
Janice Hall
Brenda Harris
Constance Hauman
Cynthia Haymon
Ying Huang
Karen Hunt
Karen Huffstodt
Elizabeth Hynes
Céline Imbert
Sumi Jo
Camellia Johnson
Kelly Kaduce
Marquita Lister
Daniela Longhi
Mary Callaghan Lynch
Catlin Lynch
Emily Magee
Catherine Malfitano
Alessandra Marc
Ana Maria Martinez
Johanna Meier
Sarah Joy Miller
Mary Mills
Leona Mitchell
Leigh Monroe
Latoria Moore
Pamela Myers
Carol Neblett
Earnestine Nimmons
Yannick Muriel Noah
Maureen O'Flynn
Lisette Oropesa
Elizabeth Parcels
Kyudo Park
Cheryl Parrish

Leah Partridge
Francesca Patané
Susan Patterson
Roberta Peters
Ashley Putnam
Sondra Radvanovsky
Roma Riddell
Cassandra Riddle
Jennifer Rowley
Theresa Santiago
Nancy Shade
Rachel Willis-Sørensen
Pamela South
Diana Soviero
Maria Spacagna
Stephanie Sundine
Joan Sutherland
Ruth Ann Swenson
Darina Takova
Maryanne Telese
Katherine Terrell
Nova Thomas
Indra Thomas
Heather Thomsom
Vivian Tierney
Leontina Vaduva
Sylvie Valayre
Benita Valente
Carol Vaness
Anna Vikre
Deborah Voigt
Ealynn Voss
Yoko Watanabe
Janet Williams
Sheryl Woods
Stella Zambalis
Ai Lan Zhu

Mezzo-Sopranos

Kate Aldrich
Graciela Araya
Bianca Berini
Frances Bible
Elaine Bonazzi
Brenda Boozer
Diane Curry
Gail Dubinbaum
Mignon Dunn
Faith Esham
Judith Forst
Vivica Genaux
Susan Graham
Denyce Graves
Muriel Costa-Greenspon
Eugenie Grunewald
Jennifer Jones
Kathleen Hegierski
Diane Kesling
Margaret Lattimore
Susanne Marsee
Irina Mishura
Cynthia Munzer
Milijana Nikolic
Marion Pratinicki
Florence Quivar
Anita Rachvelishvili
Lyudmila Shemchuk
Kathleen Segar
Tichina Vaughn
Victoria Vergara
Dolora Zajick

Countertenors

David Daniels
Anthony Roth Constanza
David Trudgeon

Tenors

Paul Spencer Adkins

Stefano Algieri
Fabio Armiliato
Roberto Aronica
Vladimir Atlantov
Antonio Barasorda
Rene Barbera
Lando Bartolini
Tito Beltran
Don Bernadini
Theresa Blake
Andrea Bocelli
Lawrence Brownlee
Robert Brubaker
William Burden
José Carreras
Charles Castronovo
Vinson Cole
Arturo Chacón Cruz
Yu Qiang Dai
Arthur Davies
Patrick Denniston
Ian DeNolfo
Tonio DiPaolo
Richard Di Renzi
Plácido Domingo
Ruben Dominguez
David Eisler
Clifton Forbis
Bruce Ford
John Fowler
Carroll Freeman
Jesus Garcia
Marcello Giordani
Massimo Giordano
Allan Glassmann
Jerry Hadley
Ben Heppner
Cesar Hernandez
Taro Ichihara
Kristjan Johansson
Paul Austin Kelly
John Keyes
Gregory Kunde
Rosario La Spina
Jeffrey Lentz
Jorge Lopez-Yanez
Fred Love
John Mac Master
Richard Margison
Ricardo Massi
Ermanno Mauro
James McCracken
José Medina
David Miller
Salvador Novoa
Stephen O'Mara
Francisco Ortiz
Antonello Palombi
Luciano Pavarotti
Scott Piper
Vladimir Popov
Eleazar Rodriguez
James Schwisow
Rico Serbo
Neil Shicoff
George Shirley
Antonio Siragusa
Craig Sirianni
Andrew Smith
Noah Stewart
Cesar Antonio Suarez
Robert Swensen
Giorgio Tieppo
Cesar Ulloa
James Valenti
Carlo Ventre
Ernesto Veronelli
Richard Versalle
Eduardo Villa

Jon Villars
Jonathon Welch
Jon Fredric West
Joseph Wolverton
Jianyi Zhang

Basses & Baritones

Donnie Ray Albert
Theodore Baerg
Gregg Baker
Ron Baker
Thomas Barrett
Kevin Bell
Ara Berberian
Richard Bernstein
Michele Bianchini
Burak Bilgili
James Butler
Carlos Chausson
John Cheek
Philip Cokorinos
Richard Cowan
Kenneth Cox
Eduardo del Campo
Mark Delavan
Matteo de Monti
Justinio Diaz
James Dietsch
Donato DiStefano
Harry Dworchak
Brent Ellis
Pablo Elvira
Andrew Foldi
Nmon Ford
Richard Fredricks
Haijing Fu
Michael Gallup
Jake Gardener
George Gaynes
Rod Gilroy
Greer Grimley
Frank Guarrera
Nathan Gunn
Eric Halfvarson
Thomas Hammons
Gordon Hawkins
Steven Hendrickson
Frank Hernandez
Jerome Hines
André Jobin
Eric Johnson
James Ketelsen
Mariusz Kwiecien
Luis Ledesma
C.Y. Liao
Charles Long
Forrest Lorey
Ricardo Lugo
Robert McFarland
James Maddalena
George Massey
Jeffrey Mattsey
Michael Mayes
Kevin Maynor
James Morris
Timothy Noble
Robert Orth
Louis Otey
David Parsons
Earle Patriarco
James Patterson
Mark Pedrotti
Rodion Pogosssov
Marian Pop
Andreas Poulimenos
Gino Quilico
Ron Raines
John Reardon
Charles Roe

Mark Rucker
Christopher Schaldenbrand
Andrew Schroeder
Georgi Selezneev
Kevin Short
Michael Smart
Henk Smit
Andrew Smith
David Rae Smith
Paulo Szot
Italo Tajo
Todd Thomas
Giorgio Tozzi
Victor von Halem
Jeffrey Wells
Stephen West
Yalvin Zhang

Conductors

Kazem Abdullah
David Charles Abell
Suzanne Mallare Acton
David Charles Agler
Franz Allers
Howard Arman
Raffi Armenian
Christian Badea
Richard Bonyngue
Richard Buckley
William Byrd
Giuliano Carella
Glen Clugston
Aaron Copland
Anton Coppala
John Dankworth
John DeMain
Klaus Donath
Antal Doráti
Leslie B. Dunner
Richard Fagen
Mark Flint
Mark Gibson
Jane Glover
Evans Halle
Henry Holt
Jacek Kasprzyk
Cal Stuart Kellogg
Kurt Klippstatter
Stefan Lano
Steven Larsen
Tania León
James Levine
Stephen Lord
John Mauceri
Randolph Mauldin
James Meena
Gustav Meier
Steven Mercurio
Edoardo Müller
Donato Renzetti
Joseph Rescigno
Stewart Robertson
Louis Salemno
William Fred Scott
Patrick Summers
Willie Anthony Waters
Steven White
Richard Woitach

Broadway and Film

Edie Adams
Brent Barrett
Marshall Borden
Eddie Bracken
Peabo Bryson
David Chaney
Imogene Coca
Patti Cohenour
Kim Criswell
David Croyer
Dom DeLuise
Nancy Dussault
Diane Frantantoni
Noel Harrison
Simon Jones
Judy Kaye
Zale Kessler
Beverly Lambert
Cleo Lane
Stephen Lehw
Rebecca Luker
Roddy McDowell
Sal Mineo
Juliet Prowse
Woody Romoff
Gary Sandy
Martha Schlamme
Tony Tanner
Leslie Uggams

Directors

Christopher Alden
David Alden
Patrick Bakman
Sandra Bernhard
Ned Cauty
Ken Cazan
Mario Corradi
Ron Daniels
Dorothy Danner

Total cost to renovate,
restore and complete the
Detroit Opera House
\$70,000,000

Italian Renaissance style

Crane's original Capitol Theatre was appointed in the "opera style," with crystal chandeliers, frescoes, brass fixtures, and marble stairways and drinking fountains.

Artisans galore

Painters, plasterers, plumbers, electricians, stagehands and riggers were among the skilled craftspeople, tradesmen and technicians needed to complete the renovation and restoration.



Pavarotti says, I will open the house for you

DiChiera saw to it that no less an authority than operatic superstar Luciano Pavarotti would certify the bona fides of the acoustics in what would become Detroit's new opera house. "We had already bought the theater and it was in total ruins but he was here to do the big concert at Tiger Stadium, so I asked him to come and "just give me your opinion of what you think."

Paint intensive More than 500 gallons of paint and 10,000 hours went into painting the Detroit Opera House. Paint historian Steve Seebom researched the original color scheme and established the palette of royal blue, cream, gold and a deep red called "Old Italian Rose." These colors were applied throughout by Grosse Pointe's Eugenio Paint Co.



The House Comes to Life: Facts and Figures

Designed by C. Howard Crane

Crane was the architect of the Capitol Theatre, which would eventually become The Detroit Opera House. It was built in 1922. He designed at least 250 theaters during his career, including Detroit's Madison Theatre (1917), Orchestra Hall (1919), the State Theatre (1925), and the Fox Theatre (1928).

Seating capacity

Originally seating 4,250, the Detroit Opera House now seats 2,700. Its stage is the largest in Michigan.

THE COMPOSER

DAVID DICHERIA 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist



ON “FOUR SONNETS”

With verses by Edna St. Vincent Millay
For soprano and piano
Composed in 1964/65 by David DiChiera

Edna St. Vincent Millay’s popularity as a poet may have had as much to do with her person as it did her poetry: She was known for her riveting readings and performances, progressive political stances, frank portrayal of both hetero- and homosexuality and, above all, her embodiment and description of new kinds of female experience and expression. “Edna St. Vincent Millay,” notes her biographer Nancy Milford, “became the herald of the New Woman.”

Millay wrote the following four sonnets between 1917 and 1922. In the summer of 1964, David DiChiera, a young professor at Oakland University, was given a volume of her poetry and fell in love with her work. Suddenly, he says, he found himself “writing music to her rapturous musings, composing as if in a fever dream.”

When he “awoke,” he says, he realized he didn’t have the rights to the work. “So then I wrote to Edna St. Vincent Millay’s publisher and the publisher responded that they didn’t have the rights. The publisher said I would have to contact her sister for permission.

“But her sister refused, saying she thought that I had chosen the sonnets unwisely, that by focusing on her past loves the poems put her sister Edna in a negative light.”

In desperation, DiChiera asked his then-fiancée, Karen VanderKloot, a student at nearby Bennett College, to call on Millay’s sister and beg her to change her mind. “I said, ‘Go and visit her and sweetly tell her that these sonnets are very special to you.’ She did and the sister relented.”



The sonnets were first performed at a concert devoted to DiChiera’s music at Oakland University in 1965. The soprano was Roma Riddell, a Canadian who was a musical and theatrical artist and principal singer in the decade of DiChiera’s “Overture to Opera” productions.

“After that, I was so absorbed in running a music department and establishing an opera company that I gave very little thought to promoting my music. But in 1977 I brought the very talented Carmen Balthrop to sing Micaela in my

production of ‘Carmen.’ She saw the sonnets on my piano and decided she wanted to sing them in a recital she was giving at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in 1978.”

In his review, Theodore W. Libby Jr. of *The Washington Star* called the work “beautifully crafted and warmly expressive of the poetry.” Paul Hume of *The Washington Post* called DiChiera “a composer with great sensitivity and keen awareness of the beauties for the voice.”

Since then, “Four Sonnets” has been widely performed, most notably by the distinguished soprano Helen Donath. She and her husband, conductor and

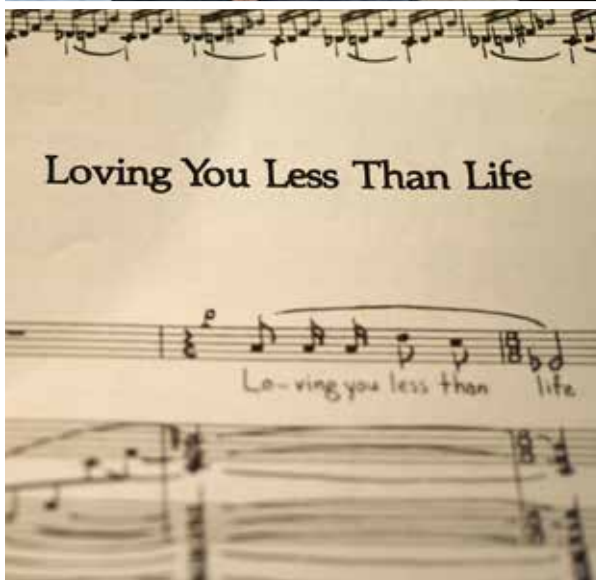
DAVID DICHERIA 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist

pianist Klaus Donath, have performed the song cycle numerous times in North America and Europe, including Lincoln Center and the Salzburg Festival.

“In August of 2002 I was at the Rockefeller Villa in Lake Como, Italy, working with composer Richard Danielpour, who I had commissioned to compose the opera ‘Margaret Garner,’ when I learned that Helen was doing my ‘Sonnets’ in Salzburg,” DiChiera says. “It was so exciting I had to go. It was one of the great thrills of my life ... to hear my music in a program that included Brahms, Schumann and Mahler.

“Over the years I have been so fortunate to have these songs interpreted by so many wonderful sopranos, and now The Kresge Foundation has made it possible to record them so that they can enjoy a wider distribution.

“I am delighted to add another wonderful artist to that roster. Soprano Leah Partridge was, after an extensive search, my choice to create the role of Roxane in the world premiere of my opera ‘Cyrano’ and her beauty and expressivity was breathtaking. To have my musical interpretation of Millay’s extraordinary sonnets brought to life again with Leah’s artistry is such a pleasure.”



Four sonnets by Edna St. Vincent Millay

I, Being Born a Woman

I, being born a woman and distressed
By all the needs and notions of my kind,
Am urged by your propinquity to find
Your person fair, and feel a certain zest
To bear your body’s weight upon my breast:
So subtly is the fume of life designed,
To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,
And leave me once again undone, possessed.
Think not for this, however, the poor treason
Of my stout blood against my staggering brain,
I shall remember you with love, or season
My scorn with pity, —let me make it plain:
I find this frenzy insufficient reason
For conversation when we meet again.

What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where, and Why

What lips my lips have kissed and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply,
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before;
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

“Four Sonnets” on CD

Tucked into the back cover of this book is a compact disc of David DiChiera’s composition, “Four Sonnets,” recorded for this monograph on September 28, 2013 at OPERA America headquarters in New York City, with pianist Craig Ketter accompanying soprano Leah Partridge.

Leah Partridge has performed in operas and as a concert soloist across the United States and in Europe. She premiered the role of Roxane in David DiChiera’s opera “Cyrano” and has recently performed at The Metropolitan Opera as the First Niece in “Peter Grimes,” as La Charmeuse in “Thais” and as Marie in “La Fille du Regiment.” She also is an assistant professor of voice at Kennesaw State University.

Craig Ketter has performed as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the world, with a repertoire that includes major piano concertos by Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov. He also has taught master classes throughout the United States, served as a guest professor in several institutions and is head of the piano faculty at the American Festival for the Arts in Houston, Texas.

Time Does Not Bring Relief

Time does not bring relief; you all have lied
 Who told me time would ease me of my pain!
 I miss him in the weeping of the rain;
 I want him at the shrinking of the tide;
 The old snows melt from every mountain-side,
 And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;
 But last year's bitter loving must remain
 Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.
 There are a hundred places where I fear
 To go, —so with his memory they brim.
 And entering with relief some quiet place
 Where never fell his foot or shone his face
 I say, "There is no memory of him here!"
 And so stand stricken, so remembering him.



David DiChiera's "Four Sonnets" was recorded on September 28, 2013 in the studio of OPERA America's New York City headquarters. Left to right: pianist Craig Ketter, soprano Leah Partridge, composer David DiChiera.

Loving You Less Than Life

Loving You Less Than Life, a Little Less

Loving you less than life, a little less
 Than bitter-sweet upon a broken wall
 Or brushwood smoke in autumn, I confess
 I cannot swear I love you not at all.
 For there is that about you in this light—
 A yellow darkness, sinister of rain—
 Which sturdily recalls my stubborn sight
 To dwell on you, and dwell on you again.
 And I am made aware of many a week
 I shall consume, remembering in what way
 Your brown hair grows about your brow and cheek,
 And what divine absurdities you say:
 Till all the world, and I, and surely you,
 Will know I love you, whether or not I do.



“The work comes into the world at an undetermined hour, from a still unknown, but it comes inevitably.”

– Giacomo Puccini

FINDING MY TIMING... This late in my career

BY DAVID DICHIERA

In 1982, I brought the incomparable Cleo Laine to Michigan Opera Theatre for her American stage debut in Sondheim’s “A Little Night Music.” As I prepare for the world premiere of my opera, “Cyrano,” I can’t help but think of the wonderful and poignant scene in which Cleo (opposite baritone Ron Raines), as Desiree Armfeldt, a successful but aging actress, questions her attempt to rekindle an old affair in the very poignant “Send In The Clowns.” She sings “Isn’t it rich, isn’t it queer, losing my timing so late in my career.” Taking her cue, I, like Desiree, have returned to rekindle the flame of an old love — my love of composing.

“...Sure of my lines, but no one is there.”

Growing up in Los Angeles — studying piano, composition and musicology at UCLA, I never imagined my career would focus on nurturing opera companies. Instead, I dreamed of being a concert pianist and expressing my emotions through my *own* music. But, it was the 1960s, a time when writing music in any style other than atonal, serial or even electronic was considered irrelevant and redundant in academic circles, so I felt compelled to abandon my muse. There I was, a neo-romantic totally out of step with what was “in.”

Knowing, as Desiree Armfeldt, that my “Love” and I were simply out of sync, I placed my composing on the back burner, and instead turned to teaching, proselytizing, cajoling and leading the charge to bring opera to Detroit, Orange County and Dayton — the communities I so proudly served. As an impresario, I felt especially rewarded (perhaps a vicarious pleasure) to be in a position that enabled me to revive neglected American works such as Blitzstein’s “Regina” (1977), Copland’s “The Tender Land” (1978) and Gruenberg’s “Emperor Jones” (1979) as well as introduce musical theater, especially



works by Sondheim “A Little Night Music” (1983), “Sweeney Todd” (1984) and “Follies” (1988), to the operatic repertoire. Aside from revivals, however, the appearance of new operas in the American musical scene was rare. For example, in 1979, the year in which I was

elected president of OPERA America, we learned that there was only one premiere of a new work in all of North America and that by a small company based in Toronto. The barren operatic landscape led us to establish a new initiative entitled “Opera for the ’80s and Beyond.” This fund was devoted entirely to encouraging opera companies to take on the risk of commissioning new works. Within a decade, dozens of new works emerged, including such seminal works as “Nixon in China,” “McTeague” and “The Secret Garden.”

While this initiative certainly served to improve the state of opera in America (as it related to expanding the repertoire) an even greater challenge stood before our industry. At that time, it became apparent that the demographic of our audiences did not reflect that of our communities, including the dramatically changing face of our urban centers. To better serve our communities, and for our every survival, it was vital that we encourage new works that more directly involved the large African American, Latino, Asian and other diverse constituencies in our cities. To this end, I enthusiastically served as chairman of a new initiative, again under the aegis of OPERA America, that encouraged opera companies to reach out and commission artists from these diverse communities. Entitled “Opera for a New America,” the program brought forth works reflective of the history, music, literature and dance of various cultures. “Opera for a New America” not only gave us exciting new works, but ultimately served to build bridges that at last linked opera to America’s rich diversity. Here in Detroit, my desire to build bridges into our extensive African American community led me to not only nurture many African American artists, but to also present productions such as “Treemonisha,” “Porgy and Bess,” and more recently the world premiere of “Margaret Garner.”

“...Just when I’d stopped opening doors...”

So what does all this operatic history have to do with my “Cyrano”? Well, during these decades of intense operatic activity on my part, the secret composer in me observed, with growing interest, a musical environment that now allows composers to draw from all styles and past periods, as well as current trends (including popular and ethnic music). With this, I felt that perhaps I could find the courage to return to my own muse without fear of rejection. At last, I felt liberated to write my *own* opera.

“...Are we a pair?...”

But an opera on what subject? Although the answer to this question wasn’t immediately clear, what I *did* know is that it should be a great love story — one that might inspire me to write music that would provide even deeper emotional resonance to the passions of its characters. Enter Bernard Uzan, an extraordinary personality, and greatly talented actor, writer, and director who came to me one day after a rehearsal and asked if I had ever considered “Cyrano” as an operatic subject. I had not, so he offered to come to my home and take me through it. His love for the play was palpable, and his delivery of the incredibly beautiful poetry was especially moving. I was drawn to the character of Cyrano

whose exterior life was fearless and outgoing with exciting esprit and panache, but who inside suffered a sense of overwhelming inadequacy which denied him from achieving personal fulfillment. “*Il m’interdit le rêve d’être aimé*” (“I am denied the dream of being loved”), he confesses to his friend Le Bret. Soon after, I composed the brief prelude that presents the contrasting themes reflective of Cyrano’s outer and inner life. As for Roxane, I was fascinated by the evolution of her character, and the attendant musical possibilities that would evoke the transition from a frivolous “*précieuse*,” absorbed with her own beauty (and that of handsome Christian), to a woman matured by sadness and an understanding of true love.

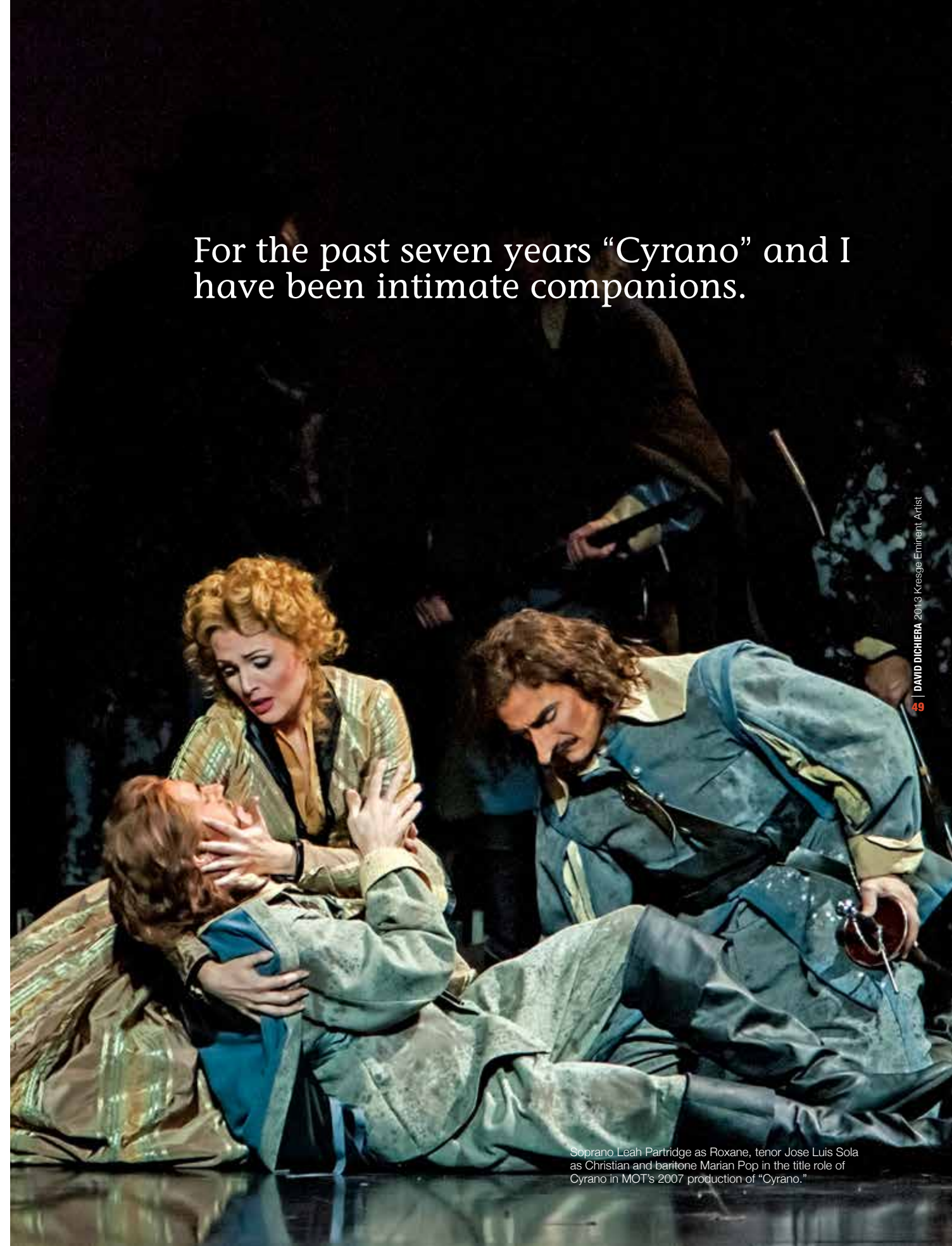
“...Isn’t it bliss?...”

For the past seven years “Cyrano” and I have been intimate companions. Our secret life together took place in early mornings before meetings, or late at night after performances on rehearsals. On a few occasions, I had the opportunity to escape the daily challenges of running an opera company to focus my full attention on my opera. Through the generosity of friends, I found myself writing in such diverse surrounds as Orange County, Manhattan, and even a half-restored castle in Scotland. I am especially grateful to Karen DiChiera and our daughters, Lisa and Christina, for their patience and encouragement.

It has been a fascinating journey collaborating with Bernard Uzan who crafted a libretto that is dramatically effective and focused in its retelling of the play. I am especially grateful to Maestro Mark Flint who encouraged me in times of depression and insecurity, and who has provided an orchestration that so clearly reflects my intentions. And, of course, I am so pleased that my colleagues Robert Driver in Philadelphia, and Robert Heuer in Miami have demonstrated their commitment to “Cyrano” by collaborating with Michigan Opera Theatre in the creation of this beautiful production by John Pascoe, and presenting the opera as part of their seasons.

When I visited Robert Driver in the summer of 2005 to acquaint him with the opera, he stopped me after minutes at the piano and exclaimed, “David, why have you been wasting your life running opera companies?” The comment took me aback, but then, like Desiree Armfeldt in contemplating her career, I accepted the fact that like Cyrano, I have had, for the past four decades, a very public outer life of community activities and am now ready to return to my youth affair with my inner life. 📖

For the past seven years “Cyrano” and I have been intimate companions.



Soprano Leah Partridge as Roxane, tenor Jose Luis Sola as Christian and baritone Marian Pop in the title role of Cyrano in MOT's 2007 production of "Cyrano."



An embarrassing moment in Act I, Scene I of "Cyrano" as Cyrano banishes the actor Montfleury.

PHILADELPHIA'S "CYRANO": Actually, They Do Make 'Em Like That Anymore

BY ANNE MIDGETTE, February 15, 2008

PHILADELPHIA — It's a story of love deferred, love lived by proxy, love finally realized late in life. It's the story of "Cyrano de Bergerac," of the prominently proboscised hero of Edmond Rostand's late-19th-century play, doomed to unrequited love. But it is also the story of composer David DiChiera and his opera, "Cyrano." For the story of "Cyrano" — which had its world premiere in Detroit in October and is now at the Opera Company of Philadelphia through Sunday — is itself an old-fashioned tale of love and late flowering. DiChiera is 72, and "Cyrano" is his first full-length opera. But he has spent his whole life loving opera and finding ways to get closer to it — as a student, as a musicologist and professor specializing in 18th-century composers, and as an administrator.

DiChiera is best known as the founder of Michigan Opera Theatre in Detroit, which he created out of whole cloth in 1971. He also founded Opera Pacific in California and served as president of the national service organization OPERA America. When he took over at OPERA America in 1979, almost nobody was writing new opera; and he created a grant program for new work, still in existence today, that has helped fuel a veritable American opera renaissance. You could say that he has spent his whole career creating the requisite preconditions to write an opera of his own.

Opera is, fundamentally, an old-fashioned art. And DiChiera is an old-fashioned composer. Debonair, with crisp, white hair and a clipped mustache, he repeatedly evokes the description of "gentleman" from people who might normally not use the term — such as Marc Scorca, his current successor at OPERA America, who calls him both "a pioneer and a dynamic visionary," as well as "beloved in our field." What DiChiera loves about opera is its potential for verbal and melodic expression — at least that can be inferred from "Cyrano," with its ravishing harmonies, arching ensembles, full-blooded arias.

In the late 1950s and '60s, when DiChiera was studying composition in an environment dominated by serialism and experiments in electronic music,

this kind of music was not just old-fashioned but downright reactionary.

"I would bring in my heartfelt music," he said with a slight smile, sitting in a Philadelphia restaurant before Wednesday's "Cyrano" performance, "and my teachers, people like Lukas Foss, would say, 'Well, yes, but you could do this, and that....' They were trying to make it more like what everybody else was doing."

Composing, it seemed, was to remain a private pleasure. DiChiera expressed his love of opera in other ways, like creating a new 2,700-seat home for Michigan Opera Theatre in the 1990s. But after that project was completed, his dream of writing an opera, in a climate more open to new opera and to a variety of musical styles, seemed within reach.

Philosophically, DiChiera is not opposed to atonality; he says he might well use it in another opera about a different subject. "Opera is theater," he says — whatever musical style contributes to the expression of the drama is there for a composer to use. But on the evidence of "Cyrano," there is no question that he loves the rich, florid harmonic language of Massenet or late Puccini. DiChiera did not orchestrate the piece himself — short on time, he worked with

the conductor and orchestrator Mark Flint — but the musical density of the score is the result of his conception.

“Cyrano” is a new opera that feels old. What is interesting is that it does not feel “neo”: the music is melodious and tonal, but generally involving; evocative of the past, but not openly derivative. Nor is it easy. On Wednesday night in Philadelphia, the orchestra under Stefan Lano audibly struggled in places (and particularly in the brass) with its evocative solo lines.

The opera gives all its performers, and particularly its singers, a tremendous amount to do. By the third performance Wednesday, fatigue was audible in a gravelly quality from the baritone Marian Pop in the title role, although he rallied in the later acts; and in the loss of color and body from the higher register of the soprano Evelyn Pollock, visually well cast as the lovely Roxane. Stephen Costello — a tenor about whom there is already much buzz in the opera world — gave indication of promise as Christian, the handsome but stupid lover who enlists Cyrano’s poetic aid to win Roxane’s love. Unlike many operas, this one started slow and got better: the balcony scene in Act 2, studded with harp runs and the stars of flute tones, was a highlight, and the final scene an appropriate climax.

DiChiera’s late-blooming composing career raises the question of what it means to love opera. Everyone in the field gives much lip service to the idea that we want new operas. Yet opera as it is appreciated by most of its fans is not a new art; those who define themselves as opera-lovers are more likely to embrace Puccini and Wagner than the most prolific American opera composers of our time, John Adams (“Nixon in China,” “Doctor Atomic”) and Philip Glass (who has written more than 20 operas, most recently “Appomattox”). Where new music is experimental and cutting-edge, opera is thought of as big and buxom and romantic, and the meeting of the two is often an uneasy fusion, in terms of its artistic value and in terms of its resonance with the public.

DiChiera is notable in that his approach is completely without pose. He has written an opera that fits any opera-lover’s definition, and he is only minimally concerned that it is not anyone’s definition of progressive. Its conservatism might make it a difficult work to champion. But it is utterly sincere, and affecting: a love story that comes from the heart. ■■

Anne Midgette’s review appeared on February 15, 2008, in *The Philadelphia Enquirer* and is reprinted here with permission of PARS.



Conductor Mark Flint, composer David DiChiera, soprano Leah Partridge (Roxane).

“When I’m casting a role and there are two people that are equally talented, I will choose the person of color because opera needs to become completely integrated in terms of diversity.”

-David DiChiera



REINVENTING AN ART FORM Opera for the '80s and Beyond

BY DAVID DICHIERA

David DiChiera was president of OPERA America from 1979 to 1983, and was chairman of the Opera for the '80s and Beyond committee and, later, the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Opera for a New America committee, from 1984 to 1992. DiChiera was the general director of Michigan Opera Theatre and Opera Pacific when he wrote this essay in 1992.

It seems hard to imagine that in 1982 ... the production of new works by opera companies in North America was a rare occurrence. A perusal of OPERA America's schedule of performances for the ... 1992-93 season lists two dozen world premieres to be given by 16 member companies. What a contrast to the state of affairs in 1982, when there was a total of four new works by then-living composers presented from our total membership of 87 opera companies.

The operatic art form, unlike dance, theater, the visual arts and to some extent the symphony, was almost exclusively a repetition of works of the past, and primarily pre-1900. Naturally, we all lamented that an art form based solely on the past was in danger of eventual extinction if it did not evolve and renew itself into the present. As producers and directors of opera companies we acknowledged the dilemma, but felt rather paralyzed in attacking the problem. 1982 was the third year of my term as president of OPERA America and while we had made substantial progress in establishing initiatives in education and membership expansion, the solution to engendering more new works still loomed as an imponderable.

It was in the summer of 1982, near the end of my term as president, that our then-Executive Director Martin Kagan brought me together with Howard Klein of the Rockefeller Foundation at an OPERA America meeting in Seattle. Through previous discussions, Martin had ascertained that Howard



David DiChiera with Denyce Graves, the star of Michigan Opera Theatre's "Margaret Garner." MOT supporter Betty Brooks is also shown, left, at the gala opening of the Detroit Opera House, 1996.

had a deep and committed interest in the need to stimulate the creation of new works.

In our conversation, it was clear that Howard felt that some of the most creative work was taking place outside the opera world. I was absolutely excited that he agreed with me that it was necessary to effect a change within the opera field and not let opera companies be "end run" by the creation of the new music theater within other fields, for that would serve to accentuate even more the atrophy current within our industry.

Because there was so little consensus among the membership about how to approach a problem of this magnitude, we decided to hold an intensive three-day forum to debate the issue and, hopefully, begin to make a difference. The Detroit Conference that took place Aug. 26-28, 1982, was probably one of the most exciting events in my career. We brought together a fascinating mixture of composers, conductors, playwrights, stage directors and general directors of opera companies — representing an incredible array

of perspectives, opinions and attitudes both positive and negative and every shade in between.

The debate was heated and included lots of grandstanding, but our facilitators, Tom Burns and Larry Hirschhorn, did a great job leading and structuring the proceedings. Only once near the end of the second day, when it was imperative that we determine some priorities for action for the final day, did chaos threaten to abort the process, and our facilitators called on me to step in and get things back on track. While there were many possible solutions and possible approaches that were valid, we prioritized and identified three needs which OPERA America should address.

First, we had to admit that as a group, those of us who were responsible for the repertoire were not exposed to and aware of what was happening creatively outside our narrow world of opera.

Second, opera companies should be given financial incentives to take risks, to bring artists together to develop new ideas and works and, most important, to understand that we need not necessarily produce all the projects we experimented with.

And finally, large amounts of grant support were essential to help companies produce those new works that were deemed worthy. Our challenge was to strike while the iron was hot, and to take advantage of the lucky circumstance that we had a foundation that was impatient to work with us.

With Opera America's annual conference just a few months away, Martin, Howard and I set out to structure the various components of a program that would be acceptable to the Rockefeller Foundation and also be approved by a membership that had had little time to be involved with the evolution of a project which would turn out to be the largest initiative in the organization's history. The greatest possible obstacle for ratification was the implementation of a large-scale grantmaking program that might tend to place companies in competition with one another and create a negative dynamic within an organization which had heretofore disbursed minimal funding. Our solution, while perhaps not ideal, was to create an arms-length panel of qualified professionals unaffiliated with Opera America companies that would decide which works should receive major production grants.

My strategy for the annual conference, in December 1983, was to appear personally at various meetings

of representatives of member companies to sell the program, answer any questions and allay any doubts before the project came up for vote. The agenda was structured so that the presentation of Opera for the '80s and Beyond became the very last item of business at the end of the conference.

My last act as president was to guide the discussion period by first giving critics an opportunity to proclaim that "we should concentrate on second productions of existing works" and that "giving large grants will tear apart the organization," then summarizing the value of this unique initiative and finally calling for the vote. The rest is now history. 📖



Opening night photo of the team behind "Margaret Garner." Clockwise, from left: Richard Danielpour, David DiChiera, Toni Morrison, and Kathleen Danielpour.

Denyce Graves starred in the title role of "Margaret Garner" when it premiered at the Detroit Opera House.



THE CREATION OF "MARGARET GARNER"

BY SUE LEVYTSKY

Composer: Richard Danielpour
Librettist: Toni Morrison

World premiere: May 7, 2005, at the Detroit Opera House
Subsequent performances by co-commissioners Cincinnati Opera in July 2005 and
Opera Company of Philadelphia in February 2006

I always believed that when we opened the Detroit Opera House that our first world premiere should celebrate and pay homage to the African American experience," says David DiChiera, recalling the opening night of the internationally significant work, "Margaret Garner."

Perhaps the most-heralded production of DiChiera's legendary career, "Margaret Garner" — in its creative team, casting, direction and production — is the summation of DiChiera's vision for diversity on the stage. "We've been dedicated at Michigan Opera Theatre to nurturing and discovering African American talent and furthering their careers by putting them on stage. And for our audiences, it's important for people to see themselves in an art form. That was the reason I produced 'Margaret Garner,' with Toni Morrison writing the libretto," DiChiera said in an interview with *Time.com*. "It's a vehicle for incredible, talented artists, particularly Denyce Graves and others we helped launch through those productions."

Overture to Development

Richard Danielpour, one of the most commissioned composers of his time, and the Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison had already begun a treatment of "Margaret Garner" when Graves, now an internationally renowned mezzo-soprano, approached DiChiera about the idea of producing the opera.



"Denyce was here at that time, 1999, singing opposite Andrea Bocelli in MOT's production of Massenet's 'Werther,'" DiChiera says. "She brought up the subject of the real Margaret Garner as her friend, the composer Richard Danielpour, was very interested in Toni's Morrison's novel of the subject, 'Beloved.' Coincidentally, my daughter Christina had brought the book to my attention, as she knew I was looking for an interesting subject for an opera and I hoped to do one about an African American."

"Margaret Garner" is based on the true story of a runaway slave in pre-Civil War Kentucky who killed a daughter rather than return her to slavery. She became the high-profile defendant in a trial arguing whether the crime involved represented murder or the destruction of property.

DiChiera says he felt that the story of "Margaret Garner," told in operatic form, was a noble idea — "the quest for freedom, a subject connecting our past, present and future" — despite the initial discouragement he felt when sounding out the idea with African American friends and colleagues.



Denyce Graves with David DiChiera and Andrea Bocelli (second from left) at DiChiera's Detroit home after a "Werther" performance in 1999.

"I thought 'it's a wonderful story, and Toni Morrison is a great icon in the black community,'" DiChiera says. "We're in a city that's more than 80 percent African American, so if we're going to be an opera company in the metropolitan area, we have to do things that invite that community to be involved with the art form. We see movies about slavery, we see plays; but an opera, with its music and its power, provides an emotional impact that goes beyond all other art forms."

Michigan Opera Theatre had much invested in "Margaret Garner" — not just \$2 million in expenses, but the prestige of the company's first world premiere in nearly 30 years. (The first, in 1976, was Thomas Pasatieri's "Washington Square.") Recognizing the divisive nature of the subject, DiChiera asked composer Danielpour to speak to a select group of community leaders to tell them "how you see this opera."

"This was no 'Porgy and Bess,'" recalls arts and community leader Betty Brooks, who participated in the roundtable. "This was based on our actual culture, the indescribable plight of a woman who killed her children because she didn't want them to be slaves. I would be very proud if 100 years from now someone in Amsterdam saw a production of 'Margaret Garner' and understood how African Americans suffered."

Moving to Center Stage

With the emotional backing of the community in place, DiChiera reached out to fellow opera companies in Cincinnati and Philadelphia — older American cities with populations as diverse as that of Detroit — to consider becoming co-commissioners and producers of the work. The practice of co-production between opera companies, using their pooled resources to defray the expenses of mounting large productions such as "Margaret Garner," originated with DiChiera himself during his simultaneous tenure as general director of three opera companies — MOT, California's Opera Pacific and Ohio's Dayton Opera.

"To take a step like this, you must have confidence in the integrity and the artistic judgment of the other person," said Robert Driver, artistic director of the Philadelphia company, in a 2005 interview with *The Detroit News*. "When David called with the idea of 'Margaret Garner' I was very open to it simply because of the person he is. He's one of the most respected people in the arts in America."

The consortium of MOT, the Cincinnati Opera and the Opera Company of Philadelphia (now Opera Philadelphia) became a reality, and by the fall of 2000 a commission was in place for Danielpour and Morrison to write the opera.



The high caliber of the creative team, the historical significance of the subject matter, local community connections to the Underground Railroad and the enduring relevance of a story about the fight for freedom encouraged the support of “flocks of angels” in all three commissioning companies. “We organized ‘The Friends of Margaret Garner’ in Detroit to especially reach out to the black community. Friends were dear — \$1,000 each,” says Betty Brooks. Funding events enjoyed significant participation from Detroit’s African American community, with a “huge amount of pride” attached to the success of these efforts.

Danielpour and Morrison finally completed work on “Margaret Garner” in December 2004. Three-week workshops, which included two costly orchestra rehearsals, had taken place in August 2003 and August 2004, wherein the score was reevaluated and revised, characters were fleshed out, staging strategies and set design were altered and thousands of rewrites were made to ready the opera for its premiere.

The Pride of a World Premiere

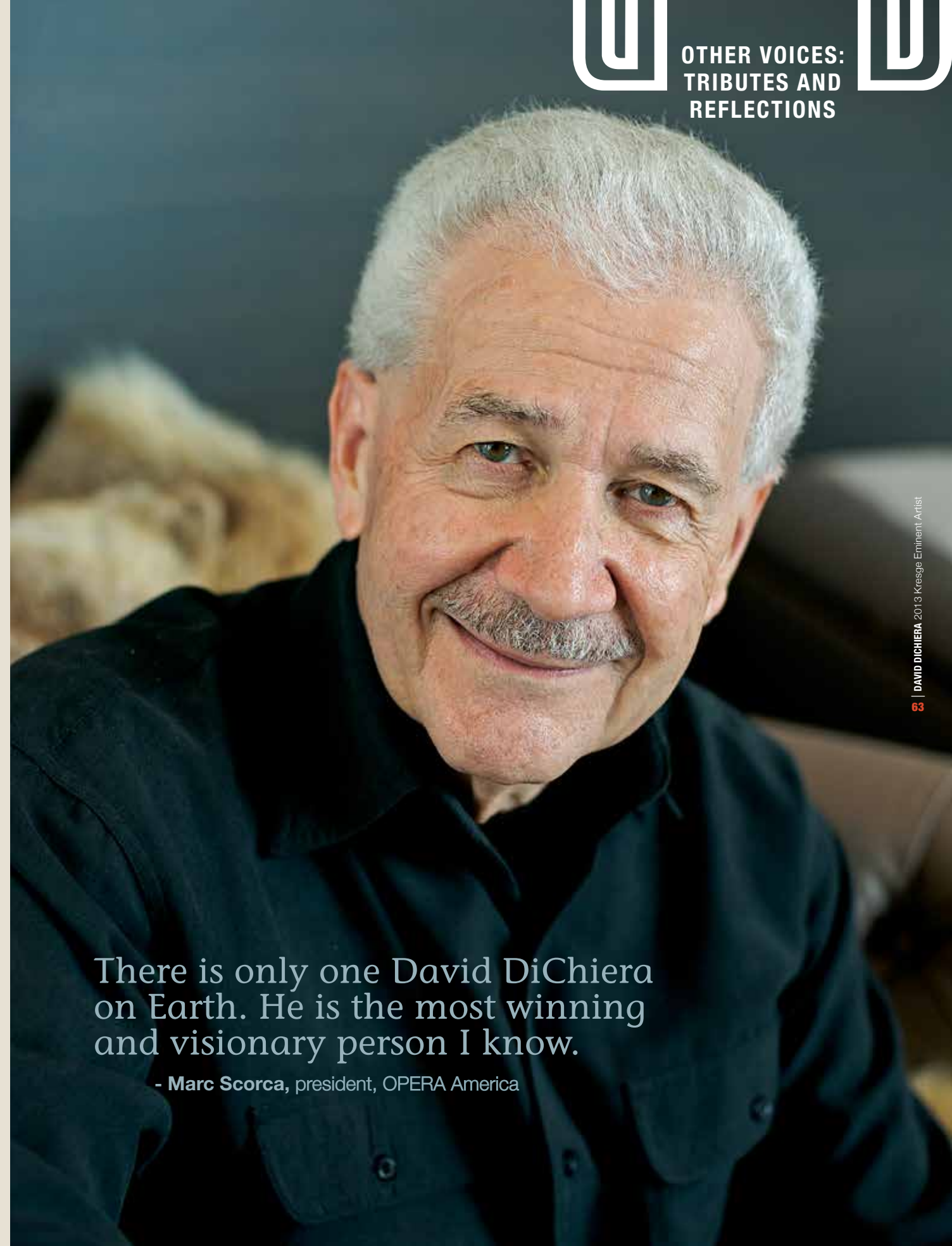
The powerhouse cast featured Graves in the title role; baritone Rodney Gilfry as Edward Gaines, the owner of Maplewood Farm; and baritone Gregg Baker as Robert, Margaret’s husband. Soprano Angela Brown replaced the legendary Jessye Norman, who had originally been cast in the role of Robert’s mother, Cilla. (Norman’s decision to leave the show was supported by DiChiera and the creative team.) Renowned stage director Kenny Leon directed, with scenic design by Marjorie Bradley Kellogg and Stefan Lano conducting.

The opera was a smashing success and a powerfully unifying experience for the city of Detroit. It drew a diverse audience, with black, white and Hispanic; old and young; novices and aficionados buzzing about how the opera was a starting point for a discussion of racism in modern-day America. The *Detroit Free Press*, in its May 7th editorial, called the debut of “Margaret Garner” at the Detroit Opera House “an extraordinary event. ... The opportunity to see something new of this magnitude in this area cannot be overstated because the whole region still struggles with issues of segregation and inability to talk easily across racial lines.”

The premiere drew to Detroit both national press coverage and the national convention of OPERA America — a coup for DiChiera, who had enjoyed an influential turn as president of the prestigious organization.

“As you diversify faces on the stage, you diversify the audience because people begin to see themselves up there. And then you diversify the board, and the theater or opera really starts to belong to the community,” director Kenny Leon said in an interview with *The Detroit News*. “This opera, I think, is bigger than all of us.”

“Margaret Garner” has gone on to critical acclaim in numerous productions since its Detroit premiere. It was staged again by MOT at the Detroit Opera House in 2008. It is one of the most significant operas since 1935’s “Porgy and Bess” to focus on the African American experience. 📺



There is only one David DiChiera on Earth. He is the most winning and visionary person I know.

- Marc Scorca, president, OPERA America



David DiChiera is a Renaissance man of the new millennium. A quiet but dynamic personality, he has kept the music and arts community in Detroit alive and well. In the 45 years that I have known David, he has always been a storehouse of energy and a positive force. He's the top in my opinion, a man of integrity and soul.

- **Marcus Belgrave**, jazz trumpeter, 2009 Kresge Eminent Artist

What more wonderful way to learn more about opera than from the man himself, David DiChiera?

Growing up in North Carolina, my exposure to opera was limited to singing the beautiful arias of "Madama Butterfly" with my high school's Glee Club and listening to opera on the radio. I never dreamed that my world of opera would begin in Detroit, a city known for cars and factories, the place where I would meet so many opera singers and conductors and experience how an opera comes together for an opening night.

For this wealth of experience, I must thank David DiChiera, who encouraged me to become part of his opera world through volunteerism. I have now been involved in volunteer work at the Detroit Opera House for over 20 years. I first met David at the Music Hall, when we were both serving on the board. He soon asked if I would take over as President of the Volunteers Association at the opera house. I did and later became a member of the board of directors and one of three chairs for the Opera Ball that preceded the opening of the Opera House. I enjoyed the rare experience of guiding funders into the house-in-progress wearing a hard hat.

The opera house has been very vital and visual in Detroit since its doors opened on April 21, 1996. What a day that was for the city of Detroit and the state of Michigan! What a grand, theatrical day, with Luciano Pavarotti and a host of opera singers performing on the stage of the new grand opera house. With this achievement, David showed people that opera would work for our blue-collar town of

cars. Where else but Detroit can you find an opera house sitting in the midst of two sports arenas — both of which were built after the opera house opened?

Working with David has given me occasion to use my creative and artistic abilities to bring cultural events of great meaning to Detroit. For me, the most important day after the opening of the opera house was the world premiere of "Margaret Garner" in 2005. Working with David as chair of the world premiere committee, we raised close to \$2 million for the production and event. The premiere was one of the proudest moments in my life for it created an opportunity to showcase "Margaret Garner," a black opera, and our grand Detroit Opera House to the world. I also chair African American dance at the Detroit Opera House, which brings in the Dance Theatre of Harlem and Alvin Ailey and other African American dance companies. Most recently, I had the privilege of helping raise \$1 million for the world premiere of David's own grand opera, "Cyrano," at the Detroit Opera House.

My work with David has brought rich experiences even further afield, first as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., and then with OPERA America in New York. I am happy to fulfill my dreams of seeing opera on stage in a magnificent house and seeing it through the eyes of Dr. David DiChiera, one of the grandest opera personas in the world.

- **Betty Brooks**, Michigan Opera Theatre board member, arts philanthropist and community leader

Ever since David DiChiera created the Detroit Opera House, it's brought about a stronger bond among people who love the arts in Detroit — he has been the life preserver for the arts in the city.

Without him, none of Detroit's arts supporters would have had the stamina, the interest, the "glue" to keep connecting the dots in the city, not only towards the opera and the opera house over the years, but towards the Music Hall, the Max M. Fisher Music Center and the Detroit Institute of Arts. He has really been the catalyst. I don't think we would have the opera house without his ability to bring people together. He has maintained his role as the nucleus, and we have stayed loyal to him because he has taught us how to be loyal and we love him for that.

- **Joanne Danto**, Michigan Opera Theatre board member



David DiChiera is the real deal — he is not lip service, he doesn't phone it in. He doesn't believe in something creative up to a point — he believes in the creative process 100 percent. I can't tell you how much I respect him for his understanding of the creative process and I could just take a number because there are so many people who feel the same way. He believes in people, he takes chances and he doesn't look back. In some ways, as an artist, his has been almost a political position. He's irreplaceable at Michigan Opera Theatre and in Detroit.

- **Heidi Ewing**, filmmaker, director of "Detropia"



David is probably one of the most amazing people I've ever met. He is known as being artistically brilliant, but as you work with him you begin to realize how brilliant of a businessman he is. His charm, his commitment, his talent, he is phenomenal in attracting people to support him who are just as committed as he is and that combination is what has caused Michigan Opera Theatre and the opera house to survive.

- **Herman Frankel**, Michigan Opera Theatre board member, business and community leader

David is a great steward, a great leader, a great role model for the whole of the industry.

- **Denyce Graves**, soprano

WHAT MANNER OF MAN, WHAT MANNER OF PLACE?

Imagine a place, a much maligned, almost mythical place where — let's call them cultural alchemists — can work their whirly-giggery and reinvent themselves and the possibilities of this place. Think, for instance of a few of these deed-doers, (a short list being all that time and space and focus will allow us here): mark Ford in his flivver factory, mark Gordy in his pop-hit plant, mark Iggy Pop's "Fun House" Stooges, mark a generation of bebop musicians in a Blue Bird Inn . . . Dr. Wright's museum, mark them, masters all of the improbable vision, of the seemingly impossible undertaking.

We have now been officially sanctioned to lengthen the list by one, mark David DiChiera.

A man who faced the improbability of creating an opera house, in this boisterous, hard-knock, heart-breaking, joy-making, nine-plus lives, city that has come back from more standing 8 counts than a B-movie Palooka.

An opera house; the full Monty. Orchestra in the pit, chorus upstage, tenors, baritones and sopranos in full voice, center, left and right. All regaled in the requisite period bling and swag, and all downtown in this rusty, blue-collar bastion of contemporary bombast. A place for the wonders of Verdi, Rossini, Puccini to unfurl, flourish.

This wonder of wonders in the restructured movie palace where I, as a boy, ventured on scores of Sunday afternoons, and with popcorn and pop at

the ready squinted through the silvery beam afloat with motes, casting Technicolor images on a larger than life screen. My fledgling imagination sailed the oceans blue, rode the wild, wide western range, cruised the noir night in pursuit of its own improbable dreams.

Rather than taking the path of least resistance and easing along escape-route expressways in search of fairer weather or greener grass, David adopted the notion of Matthew 16:18, and, upon a rock in the 1500 block of Broadway morphed the former Capitol Theatre into The Detroit Opera House, home of Michigan Opera Theatre. Proving once again, that there is no improbability that in this experimental city on the Straits, this town of tilters against the towering windmills of doubters; stone slingers against the Goliaths of nay-sayers of impracticable dreams, against smart money red-lining, and the conventional wisdom of Doubting Thomases, that with the proper sower and the proper seed sown on the proper soil even the barely imaginable may blossom.

Until, once again it dawns on us that this business of improbable dreams done by indomitable doers is not an anomaly at all, that this place is in fact a place to be, rather than be from. Causing us, once again, to celebrate this manner of man in this manner of place.

Cue the fat lady.
On your feet.

Bravissimo, David.
Bravissimo, Detroit.

- **Bill Harris**, writer, educator, 2011 Kresge Eminent Artist

I look up to Dr. DiChiera because I know he's about making a difference in the world. I love him.

- **Kenny Leon**, director of "Margaret Garner"

Picture a little boy whose immigrant parents, working as day laborers, could not read, write, or speak English. Imagine him growing up poor in the hilly town of McKeesport, Pa., with little opportunity for success. Did he dare to dream anyhow? Had he read Langston Hughes' poem, "Hold fast to dreams/ For if dreams die,/ Life is a broken-winged bird/ That cannot fly."? Was he determined never to let his wings be broken? In spite of adversity, did he already nourish the belief that he had the ability to soar to monumental heights?

I first met David DiChiera during the school year of 1965-66 when I was a research associate at Oakland University and he was teaching there. We were two of several persons invited to a dinner party at the home of one of the professors of English. While I have forgotten most of the professors I met during the one year I was at OU, David remained in my memory. I did not know how accomplished a person he was, but I was impressed by his friendliness and modesty. Conversing with him, I tried to find out more about him and his career, but all I learned was that he taught music.

After he left OU and eventually settled in Detroit, I found out much more about his dedication to music and his phenomenal achievements. I will always be grateful that he chose this city to found the Michigan Opera Theatre, a city which had only an occasional taste of opera, a city where most African Americans were not accustomed to attending what little opera was available. Many Caucasians in Metro Detroit were not interested in opera either.

Thank you, David, for holding fast to your dream and for expanding our musical interests and experiences to include a previously unfamiliar genre. Thank you, too, for including African American operatic performers, as well as operas such as "Margaret Garner." You have made a very positive difference in the arts in Detroit, and I for one will be forever grateful. And thank you, Kresge Foundation, for naming Dr. DiChiera the 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist. This is a well-deserved honor.

- **Naomi Long Madgett**, publisher, poet, 2012 Kresge Eminent Artist and Poet Laureate of the City of Detroit



If you watch David, you can learn a style and a way of embracing life that is of tremendous value. David has a gift for identifying talent that I believe is rare. But his gifts aren't restricted to those in music. It involves everyday people. His ability to communicate with people, to be interested in you and place worth in your presence, is just as much a talent of his as his ability to compose.

- **Nora Moroun**, arts philanthropist

.....

Luciano Pavarotti, one of the most successful tenors of all time, has been quoted as saying, "People think I'm disciplined. It is not discipline. It is devotion. There is a great difference."

The residents and business community in the city of Detroit, and really anyone who has a deep appreciation of opera, know the difference that Dr. DiChiera has made in making the glorious Detroit Opera House, and the tremendous talent that performs on its stage, a significant part of what makes Detroit special.

In fact, Pavarotti and a number of celebrities and dignitaries attended the triumphant opening of the Detroit Opera House in 1996, an event made possible through years of hard work by Dr. DiChiera. He was the only person for the job, as the task required both a devoted soldier and the soul of a true artist.

Dr. DiChiera has been a wonderful partner for General Motors and The General Motors Foundation, taking us on the journey to build this landmark every step of the way. We became contributors at the beginning, and we maintain our relationship with Dr. DiChiera and his staff. His devotion to the Detroit Opera House, and to bringing opera to our city, moved private citizens, corporations and foundations to contribute more, to be better patrons of the arts and, frankly, better citizens of the Detroit community.

Today, we enjoy the splendor of an evening at the Detroit Opera House, not only because of its grandeur, or because of the experiences we have within its walls, but because Dr. DiChiera greets us with his wonderful presence, and at the same time gives us a reminder of what devotion can accomplish.

- **Vivian R. Pickard**, President, General Motors Foundation and Director, General Motors Corporate Relations

David is not the type to press his work on other people. He has always been very discreet about his talent, not imposing anything on anyone.

Most artists, we like to talk about ourselves and to expand on how wonderful we are, but not David, he never does that.

What so impresses me about David is his ability to accommodate ideas other than his own. He is not stuck to what he has done, he is always ready to revisit the work.

This quality is part of his personality — I've seen this in him throughout our long friendship. David is always questioning other people as much as he questions himself about ideas or knowledge.

- **Bernard Uzan**, opera director and librettist, "Cyrano"

.....

David is one of my role models in the way he handles his business and in the way he treats people. There's a lot to be learned from David in how to be a great leader.

To me, David is more than just a guy who runs the opera house. He has inspired other folks to do more in Detroit. It would have been easy for someone in his position to get discouraged, to change their vision when we had very difficult times here in 2007-08 — there was every reason for those in the arts and cultural world to be discouraged because the support dropped away. David never let it daunt him, he always had a vision, he always had encouragement for others. His was a steady hand at a very difficult time and he set the bar for a lot of folks in the community.

We couldn't have asked for a better gentleman to be involved in our community. David is the consummate professional — he cares about the community, he understands the broader role of what he does, he always has time for people.

And let's not forget, he's taught me a lot about opera. For a kid who grew up in Detroit, that's quite an accomplishment.

- **James G. Vella**, President, Ford Motor Company Fund

David DiChiera is a superstar in every sense of the word. He is so well known in the opera world — he is as famous in that world as the top baseball players in the baseball world.

David has been consistently committed to Detroit and to the Opera House and to Michigan Opera Theatre for 43 years. No public figure here has that record. I don't think there is anyone that even comes close — I'm talking politicians, business leaders, other community leaders. David doesn't make the money he deserves, he's constantly sacrificing himself, he's been offered umpteen opportunities elsewhere, but he's stayed true to his baby here in Detroit. He is universally loved — everybody loves David in that they respect him for the consistency and the integrity of his vision, for the constant dedication to what he has done and his personal determination.

- **R. "Rick" Jamison Williams Jr.**
MOT Board Chairman

I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been chosen to sing Dr. DiChiera's music. When I sang the role of Roxane in "Cyrano," he wrote an aria specifically for my voice and strengths as a singer. His writing is achingly beautiful and truly expresses the emotional journey of a character. His songs are equally as moving. The songs require a bit more maturity in the sound, and the settings of the St. Vincent Millay texts are very compelling, using chest register and extreme high notes to portray the angst of time moving on and love lost. Dr. DiChiera has been a champion for the arts throughout the United States. For many years he has kept artists in business, forgoing his own craft. I hope he can find time in his later years to continue to express his kind and emotional soul through his compositions.

- **Leah Partridge**, Soprano, "Roxane" in David DiChiera's "Cyrano" and original recording artist of his "Four Sonnets," the CD of which accompanies this monograph.



CITY OF DETROIT
MAYOR'S OFFICE

COLEMAN A. YOUNG MUNICIPAL CENTER
2 WOODWARD AVE., SUITE 1126
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226
PHONE 313•224•3400
FAX 313•224•4128
WWW.DETROITMI.GOV

June 1, 2013

Dr. David DiChiera
General Director
Michigan Opera Theatre
Detroit Opera House
1526 Broadway
Detroit, MI 48226

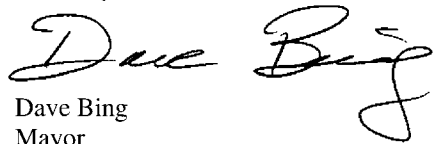
Dear David,

Congratulations, for receiving the 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist award.

The presence of a strong arts and cultural community is essential to any major city. The City of Detroit is fortunate to have such a creative and inspirational artist who is committed to revitalizing our community. Through your work at the Michigan Opera Theatre and your community involvement, you have been able to bridge the cultural divide and attract diverse audiences to your performances. You have been a great partner in helping to transform Detroit and improve the quality of life for our residents.

Thank you for your many contributions to the City of Detroit and for teaching people of all ages and ethnicities about the transformative power of the arts.

Sincerely,


Dave Bing
Mayor

DAVE BING, MAYOR



STATE OF MICHIGAN
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

BRIAN CALLEY
LT. GOVERNOR

July 1, 2013

Dr. David DiChiera
General Director
Michigan Opera Theatre
Detroit Opera House
1526 Broadway
Detroit, Michigan 48226


Dear David:

As Governor of Michigan, it gives me great pleasure to join with The City of Detroit and the Michigan Opera Theatre to congratulate you on being named the 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist.

I would like to applaud your dedication to preserving the arts through opera and continuing the rich tradition of the Michigan Opera Theatre. Through your efforts, you have instilled in many the importance of opera music and performance. Few can say that they have contributed to the future of their art in such a way as you have. On behalf of the people of Michigan, thank you for your many contributions to our great state.

Once again, congratulations on being named the 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist. I extend best wishes to you in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Rick Snyder
Governor

GEORGE W. ROMNEY BUILDING • 111 SOUTH CAPITOL AVENUE • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
www.michigan.gov

DEBBIE STABENOW
MICHIGAN

United States Senate

133 HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2204

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
BUDGET
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
FINANCE

September 19, 2013

David DiChiera
Michigan Opera Theatre
1526 Broadway St
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear David,

Congratulations on being named the 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist.

This is a well-deserved recognition of your commitment to the City of Detroit and the arts. Your leadership and vision have made the Michigan Opera Theatre a catalyst for the City's revitalization.

Thank you for your focus on encouraging an appreciation for music and opera among young and old alike and building cultural bridges through the arts. We are very fortunate to have someone with your commitment and talent in Michigan.

Again, congratulations. I wish you continued success in the future.

Sincerely,

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

221 W. LAKE LANSING ROAD
SUITE 100
EAST LANSING, MI 48823
(517) 203-1760

243 W. CONGRESS STREET
SUITE 550
DETROIT, MI 48226
(313) 961-4330

432 N. SAGINAW STREET
SUITE 301
FLINT, MI 48502
(810) 720-4172

3335 S. AIRPORT ROAD W.
SUITE 68
TRAVERSE CITY, MI 49684
(231) 929-1031

3280 BELTLINE COURT
SUITE 400
GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49525
(616) 975-0052

1901 W. RIDGE
SUITE 7
MARQUETTE, MI 49855
(906) 228-8756

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

CARL LEVIN
MICHIGAN

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2202

June 26th, 2013

Dr. David DiChiera, General Director
Michigan Opera Theatre
Detroit Opera House
1526 Broadway
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Dr. DiChiera,

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you on being selected to receive the Kresge Eminent Artist of 2013 Award. This recognition speaks highly of your professional achievements and contributions to the performing arts.

For over half a century, you have helped bring the beauty and passion of opera to new audiences. As artistic director for opera companies in Michigan, Ohio and California, your administrative skill and artistic acumen have brought immense joy to audiences across the country. You have also left an indelible mark on American opera as a composer in your own right.

In addition to creating or presenting great works of art, you have built a remarkable record of making opera available in new ways to new communities. Not only have you provided an important artistic pipeline to the people of Michigan, but you gave art a starring role in efforts to revitalize and unify our city of Detroit. As president of Opera America from 1979 to 1983, you have helped bring opera to previously untouched communities across the country. And you have been a leader in efforts to encourage and provide funding for new American works and artists.

Your accomplishments as an artist, an administrator, and a leader with the vision to seek new audiences and new missions for opera as a force for good are remarkable and unique. Again, I wish to congratulate you on this achievement and wish you all the best in the future.

Sincerely,

Carl Levin

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER



Born: April 8, 1935,
McKeesport, Pennsylvania

Education

1956
B.A., Phi Beta Kappa
UCLA
Los Angeles, California

1958
M.A., Composition
UCLA
Los Angeles, California

1962
Ph.D., Musicology
UCLA
Los Angeles, California

Professional Activities

1957, 1961
Instructor
UCLA
Los Angeles, California

1962
Associate Professor
Michigan State University-Oakland
Rochester, Michigan

1963-65
Assistant Dean
Continuing Education in the Arts
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

1963-1974
Director
Overture to Opera
Detroit Grand Opera Association
Detroit, Michigan

1965-1972
Chairman
Department of Music
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

1971-
**Founder/General Director/Artistic
Director**
Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT)
Detroit, Michigan

1975-1982
Founder/Artistic Director
Music Hall Center for
the Performing Arts
Detroit, Michigan

1986-1996
Founder/Director
Opera Pacific
Orange County, California

Appointments

1979-1983
President
OPERA America
New York, New York (formerly in
Washington, D.C.)

August 23-26, 1983
Chairman
Conference on New American
Works
Sponsored by OPERA America,
Rockefeller Foundation and
National Endowment for the Arts

September, 1983
Author: Preface
Perspectives: Creating and
Producing Contemporary Opera
and Musical Theatre
A Series of Fifteen Monographs,
Published by OPERA America

1981-1993
Artistic Director
Dayton Opera
Dayton, Ohio

Trustee
National Institute of Music Theatre

Board Member
American Arts Alliance

Panel Member
National Endowment for the Arts
Washington, D.C.

Chairman
Opera/Musical Theater Panel
National Endowment for the Arts
Washington, D.C.

August 3-9, 1984
Chairman
2nd Annual Conference/Verona,
Italy
Public Address: "Evolution of the
Opera Audience"

Vice President
International Association of Lyric
Theatre
Liege, Belgium



Commissions

1976
Washington Square
 Thomas Pasatieri/Kenward Elmslie
 Adapted from the novel by
 Henry James
 Commissioned and received its world
 premiere October 1, 1976, at the Music
 Hall Center for the Performing Arts in
 a Michigan Opera Theatre production.

2005
Margaret Garner
 Richard Danielpour/Toni Morrison
 Commissioned and received its world
 premiere May 7, 2005, at the Detroit
 Opera House in a \$2 million Michigan
 Opera Theatre production.



Left to right: David DiChiera in action with Barbara Wrigley, Lorne Greene, Shirley Eder and the Channel 56 Telethon, San Francisco Mayor Diane Feinstein, soprano Beverly Sills, and Gov. Jim Blanchard and his wife, Janet.

Publications

“Giuseppe und Gian Francesco de Majo”
Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart
 Volume VIII
 Bärenreiter-Verlag
 Heinrich-Schütz-Allee 35-37
 Kassel, Germany, 1960

“Giuseppe Martucci”
Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart
 Volume VIII
 Bärenreiter-Verlag
 Heinrich-Schütz-Allee 35-37
 Kassel, Germany, 1960

“Giovanni Battista Mele”
Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart
 Volume IX
 Bärenreiter-Verlag
 Heinrich-Schütz-Allee 35-37
 Kassel, Germany, 1961

“Saverio Mercadante”
Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart
 Volume IX
 Bärenreiter-Verlag
 Heinrich-Schütz-Allee 35-37
 Kassel, Germany, 1961

“Josef Myslivecek”
Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart
 Volume IX
 Bärenreiter-Verlag
 Heinrich-Schütz-Allee 35-37
 Kassel, Germany, 1961

“Los Angeles: New Opera Premiered”
The Music Magazine
 July 1962, p. 27

“A Producer looks at Kurt Weill”
Impresario Magazine of the Arts
 February-March 1969
 Village House Publishers, Inc.
 Oak Park, Michigan

“Majo, Gian Francesco de”
The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians
 Volume 11
 Edited by Stanley Sadie
 Macmillan Publishers Limited
 London, England, 1980

“Majo, Giuseppe de”
The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians
 Volume 11
 Edited by Stanley Sadie
 Macmillan Publishers Limited
 London, England, 1980

“Josef Myslivecek”
The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians
 Volume 13
 Edited by Stanley Sadie
 Macmillan Publishers Limited
 London, England, 1980

“Majo, Gian Francesco de”
The New Grove Dictionary of Opera
 Volume III
 Edited by Stanley Sadie
 Oxford University Press
 New York, New York, 1992

“Majo, Giuseppe de”
The New Grove Dictionary of Opera
 Volume III
 Edited by Stanley Sadie
 Oxford University Press
 New York, New York, 1992

“Sarti, Giuseppe”
The New Grove Dictionary of Opera
 Volume IV
 Edited by Stanley Sadie
 Oxford University Press
 New York, New York, 1992

“Sacchini, Antonio (Maria Gasparo Gioacchino)”
The New Grove Dictionary of Opera
 Volume IV, pp. 114–116.
 Edited by Stanley Sadie
 Oxford University Press
 New York, New York, 1992

Selected Awards and Recognitions

1956
Atwater Kent Award
 UCLA
 Los Angeles, California

1956
Gershwin Award
 UCLA
 Los Angeles, California

1959
Fulbright Scholar
 Italian Opera and Composition
 Council for International Exchange
 of Scholars
 Washington, D.C.

Certificate of Appreciation
 The Honorary Roman Gribbs
 Mayor of Detroit
 Detroit, Michigan

1976
Senate Resolution
 Tribute to the Michigan Opera
 Theatre on the Occasion of the
 world premiere of a new opera,
 “Washington Square.”
 Michigan Senate
 Lansing, Michigan

1977
Cavaliere
 Order of Cavaliers
 Bestowed by the President of Italy
 Rome, Italy

1979
Michiganian of the Year
The Detroit News
 Detroit, Michigan

March, 1979
**David DiChiera: Downtown Detroit
 Ambassador**
 Certificate of Recognition
 Center Business District
 Detroit, Michigan

February 14, 1980
Senate Resolution
 Tribute to David DiChiera in
 recognition of being named
 Michiganian of the Year
 Michigan Senate
 Lansing, Michigan

1980
**Il Michelangelo for Distinguished Service
 to Children**
 Boys Town of Italy
 Detroit, Michigan

1981
Key to the City of San Francisco
 Presented by Diane Feinstein,
 Mayor
 San Francisco, California

1981
Honorary Citizen of New Orleans
 City Council of New Orleans
 New Orleans, Louisiana

May 7, 1982
The President's Cabinet Award
 University of Detroit
 Detroit, Michigan

February 20, 1988
Friends of Mercy Award
 Mount Carmel Mercy Hospital/
 Samaritan Health Center
 Detroit, Michigan

1989
Lee Hill Career Achievement Award
Detroit Free Press
 Detroit, Michigan

February 14, 1991
Resolution
 Honoring David and Karen
 DiChiera as winners of Bethel
 A.M.E. Church Brotherhood Award
 Wayne County Commission,
 4th District
 Detroit, Michigan

February 24, 1991
I Am My Brother's Keeper
 Presented to Dr. and Mrs. David
 DiChiera
 Brotherhood Bethel A.M.E. Church
 Detroit, Michigan

1993
Contributions to the Arts
 1981-1993 as Artistic Director of
 Dayton Opera
 Arts Dayton
 Dayton, Ohio

1993
Proclamation Resolution
 Celebrating David DiChiera,
 Artistic Director
 Board of County Commissioners/
 Dayton Opera
 Montgomery County, Ohio

1995
Golden Apple Award
 The Roeper School
 Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

1996
International Heritage Hall of Fame
 International Institute of Detroit
 Detroit, Michigan

1996
Resolution
 Honoring David DiChiera and his
 contributions to opera and the City
 of Detroit
 Wayne County Commission,
 12th District
 Detroit, Michigan

1996
Citizen of the Week
 WWJ Newsradio 950
 CBS Affiliate
 Detroit, Michigan



1996
Marquee Award
The Theatre Historical Society
Elmhurst, Illinois

1997
Phoenix Award
For Outstanding Accomplishment
in Conservation and Preservation
Society of American Travel Writers
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

1997
The Preservation Wayne Honor Award
Preservation Wayne
Detroit, Michigan

1997
Merrill-Palmer Award
For Distinguished Service
Metropolitan Detroit Teen Confer-
ence
Merrill-Palmer Skillman Institute
Detroit, Michigan

1998
Commencement Speaker
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

1998
Honorary Doctor of Music
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

1998
Award of Recognition
Detroit City Council
Detroit, Michigan

1998
Certificate of Special Recognition
Wayne County Commission
Detroit, Michigan

1999
Spirit of Innovation Award
Michigan Opera Theatre
Michigan Council for the Arts and
Cultural Affairs
Detroit, Michigan

1999
**The Christopher Columbus Day "Man of
the Year" Award**
1999 Columbus Day Celebration
Committee
Detroit, Michigan

2000
Bridge Builder's Award
Partners for Livable Communities
Washington, D.C.

2001
Honorary Ph.D.
Doctor of Arts
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

2001
Arts Advocate Award
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

2001
Armenian Scroll
In recognition of David DiChiera's
pioneering of the Armenian
National Opera "Anoush"
The Armenian Community of Detroit
Detroit, Michigan

2001
Certificate of Appreciation
The Adcraft Club of Detroit
Detroit, Michigan

April 28, 2002
Italian American of the Year
Italian Study Group
Detroit, Michigan

2004
Honorary Ph.D.
Doctor of Humane Arts
Marygrove College
Detroit, Michigan

2004
Induction into The Leaders Club
School of Business Administration
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

2004
Honoree/2004 NANM Award's Banquet
National Association of Negro
Musicians
Atlanta, Georgia

2005
Stylemaker
Metro Parent Magazine
Ferndale, Michigan

2005
Resolution
Honoring David DiChiera on his
70th birthday
Wayne County Commission
Detroit, Michigan

2005
Resolution
Honoring David DiChiera for his
passionate dedication to operatic
artistry and his undying
commitment to the city of Detroit.
Detroit City Council
Detroit, Michigan

2005
Certificate of Appreciation
Detroit City Council
Detroit, Michigan

2005
**Publisher's Choice Award/Michigan Opera
Theatre**
Wilde Awards
Between the Lines Magazine
Pride Source Media Group
Livonia, Michigan

2005
Honoree
The ACLU of Michigan
Detroit, Michigan

2006
Spirit of Giving Award
Franklin-Wright Settlements
Detroit, Michigan

2006
Lifetime Achievement Award
National Opera Association
Canyon, Texas

2008
Closing the Gap Award
New Detroit, Inc.
Detroit, Michigan

2008
**Neal Shine Award for Exemplary
Regional Leadership**
Detroit Free Press
Detroit, Michigan

2008
Honorary Ph.D.
Doctor of Arts
Madonna University
Livonia, Michigan

2009
Distinguished Warrior
Detroit Urban League
Detroit, Michigan



Top: David DiChiera greeting the next generation of opera lovers at The Detroit Opera House. Bottom: In an effort to expand its audience, the Detroit Opera House opens its doors to a variety of events. Here, David DiChiera at a benefit for the Michigan Humane Society.

2010
Opera Honors
National Endowment for the Arts
(NEA)
Washington, D.C.

2010
Honorary Ph.D.
Doctor of Humane Letters
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

2011
Molti Grazie!
In celebration of the 40th
anniversary of its founding
Michigan Opera Theatre
Detroit, Michigan

2012
Knight Arts
James S. and James L. Knight
Foundation
Detroit, Michigan

2012
Honoree
Italian Heritage Society
Detroit, Michigan

2012
I Pagliacci/Michigan Opera Theatre
Best Musical or Opera Production
Wilde Awards
Encore Michigan
Livonia, Michigan

2013
Kresge Eminent Artist
The Kresge Foundation
Troy, Michigan

2013
**Executives Club Lifetime
Achievement Award**
Detroit Athletic Club
Detroit, Michigan

Musical Works

1957

Sacred Cantata

For organ, chorus and soloists
Church of Jesus Christ
Los Angeles, California

1958

Piano Concerto

Master's Thesis in Composition
University of California at Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

1959

Piano Sonata

Commissioned by the United States
Information Service
World Premiere
Naples Festival of Contemporary
and American Music
Naples, Italy
Broadcast Radio Italiana

1963

Lament for Two Pianos

Premiere
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

1963

Fantasy for Violin and Piano

Premiere
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

1964-65

Four Sonnets

For soprano and piano
To verses by Edna St. Vincent Millay
- *I, Being Born a Woman*
- *What Lips My Lips Have Kissed,
and Where, and Why*
- *Time Does Not Bring Relief*
- *Loving You Less Than Life, a
Little Less*

Premiere
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

Black Beads

Three Songs for Mezzo-Soprano
and Piano
To verses by Richard Kubinski
World Premiere
Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

1973

Rumpelstiltskin

(With Karen VanderKloot DiChiera,
libretto by Joan Hill)
One-act children's opera
Premiered and toured by the Michigan
Opera Theatre Community Program

1998

Four Sonnets

World Premiere for soprano and
orchestra
Orchestration by Steven Mercurio
[John DeMain, conductor; Helen
Donath, soprano]
Commissioned for the Madison
Symphony Orchestra
Oscar Mayer Theater
Madison Civic Center
Madison, Wisconsin

2007

Cyrano

Full-length grand opera
Libretto by Bernard Uzan;
orchestration by Mark Flint
World Premiere
Michigan Opera Theatre
Detroit Opera House
Detroit, Michigan

2009

Souvenir d'Arras

For violin, cello and piano
(Based on themes from the Arras
scene in the grand opera "Cyrano.")
World Premiere, May 22, 2009
Ambassador Chamber Trio
Theatre d'Arras
Arras, France

Our Congratulations

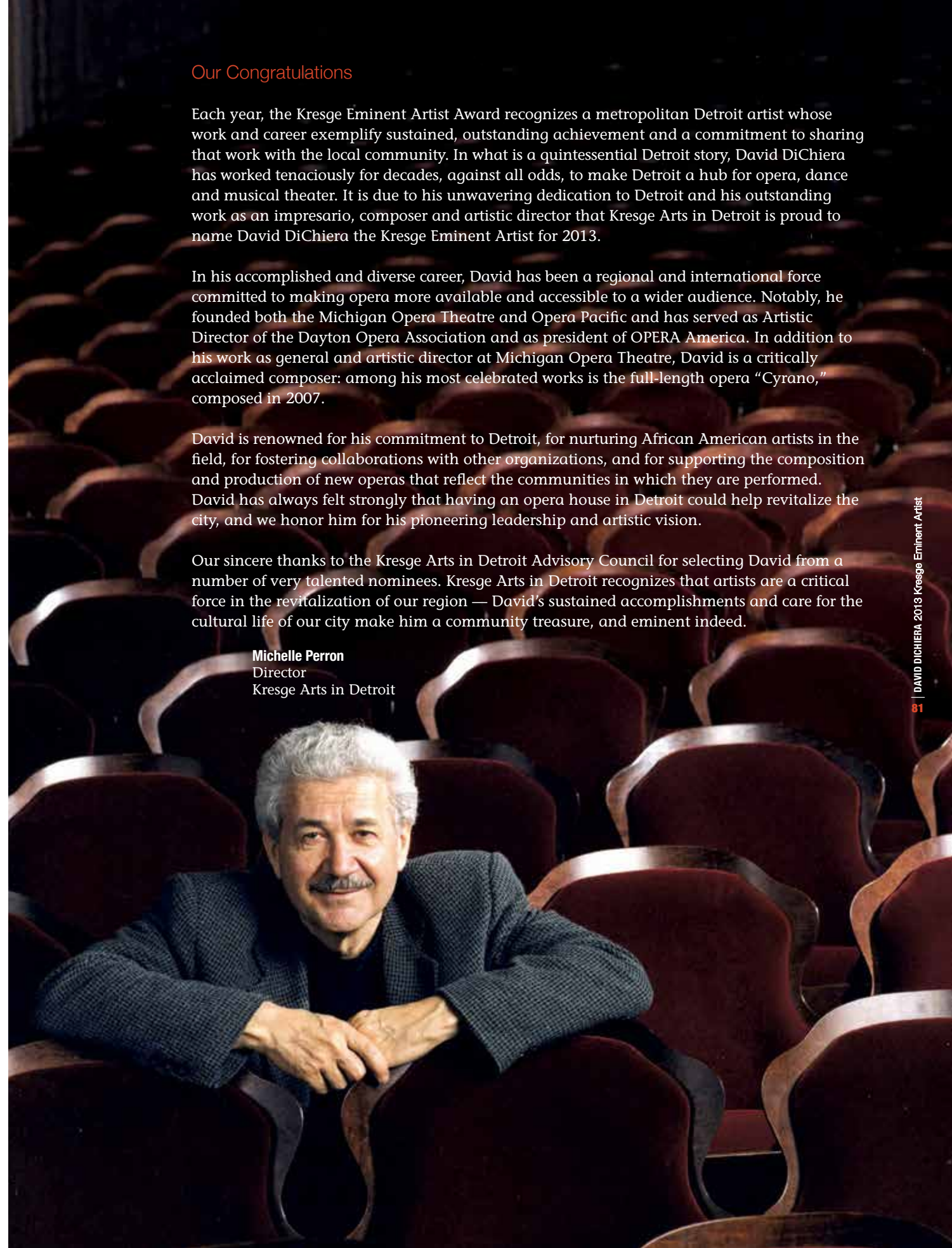
Each year, the Kresge Eminent Artist Award recognizes a metropolitan Detroit artist whose work and career exemplify sustained, outstanding achievement and a commitment to sharing that work with the local community. In what is a quintessential Detroit story, David DiChiera has worked tenaciously for decades, against all odds, to make Detroit a hub for opera, dance and musical theater. It is due to his unwavering dedication to Detroit and his outstanding work as an impresario, composer and artistic director that Kresge Arts in Detroit is proud to name David DiChiera the Kresge Eminent Artist for 2013.

In his accomplished and diverse career, David has been a regional and international force committed to making opera more available and accessible to a wider audience. Notably, he founded both the Michigan Opera Theatre and Opera Pacific and has served as Artistic Director of the Dayton Opera Association and as president of OPERA America. In addition to his work as general and artistic director at Michigan Opera Theatre, David is a critically acclaimed composer: among his most celebrated works is the full-length opera "Cyrano," composed in 2007.

David is renowned for his commitment to Detroit, for nurturing African American artists in the field, for fostering collaborations with other organizations, and for supporting the composition and production of new operas that reflect the communities in which they are performed. David has always felt strongly that having an opera house in Detroit could help revitalize the city, and we honor him for his pioneering leadership and artistic vision.

Our sincere thanks to the Kresge Arts in Detroit Advisory Council for selecting David from a number of very talented nominees. Kresge Arts in Detroit recognizes that artists are a critical force in the revitalization of our region — David's sustained accomplishments and care for the cultural life of our city make him a community treasure, and eminent indeed.

Michelle Perron
Director
Kresge Arts in Detroit



A Note from Richard L. Rogers

The College for Creative Studies is proud to partner with The Kresge Foundation to administer the Kresge Eminent Artist Award through the Kresge Arts in Detroit program. CCS believes strongly in the importance of individual artists to society, and we particularly value the role they are playing today in energizing and reimagining our community. As it is the College's mission to educate the next generations of artists, we are glad to be part of a program that recognizes people who have devoted their lives to art and who have enriched the lives of so many others.

I am particularly proud that CCS is playing a role in honoring David DiChiera, who brilliantly combines the roles of musician, impresario and community advocate. He is a dear colleague and an inspiration to those of us who lead cultural institutions in the region. His deeply honed musical sensibilities combined with a steely determination and deep love for this city have given us great opera in a great opera house. He is a hero to all who want to build a more robust cultural life in Detroit and richly deserves recognition as the 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist.

Richard L. Rogers
President
College for Creative Studies



Kresge Arts in Detroit Advisory Council

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The Kresge Eminent Artist Award

Established in 2008, the Kresge Eminent Artist Award honors an exceptional literary, fine or performing artist whose influential body of work, lifelong professional achievements and proven, continued commitment to the Detroit cultural community are evident. The Kresge Eminent Artist Award celebrates artistic innovation and rewards integrity and depth of vision with the financial support of \$50,000 as judged by the Kresge Arts in Detroit Advisory Council. The College for Creative

Studies administers the Kresge Eminent Artist Award on behalf of The Kresge Foundation.

The Kresge Eminent Artist Award, annual Kresge Artist Fellowships, and multi-year grants to arts and cultural organizations in metropolitan Detroit constitute Kresge Arts in Detroit, the foundation's effort to provide broad support to the regional arts community.

Kresge Eminent Artist Award Winners



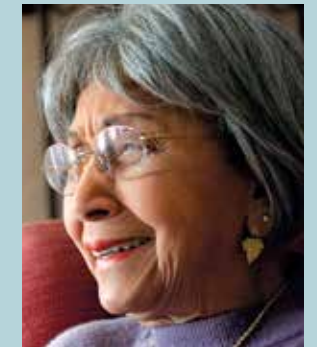
Charles McGee
2008



Marcus Belgrave
2009



Bill Harris
2011



Naomi Long Madgett
2012

Charles McGee is an artist of international renown whose work has been celebrated in hundreds of exhibitions from Detroit to Bangkok. He has been a teacher and mentor to thousands of young artists, founded galleries and arts organizations and created opportunities for others to share their work and ideas. His paintings, assemblages and sculptures have been commissioned and collected by prestigious institutions and individuals around the world and are in the permanent collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts. Energetic, always probing and eager to reinvent, McGee remains prolific and vital as he enters the seventh decade of a distinguished career, with several public art projects in development.

Master jazz trumpet player and recording artist Marcus Belgrave has enthralled audiences world-wide with his musical virtuosity and mentored scores of aspiring young musicians, many of whom went on to become great artists themselves. His tireless work, amazing technical abilities and the joy and spontaneity with which he creates distinguish him worldwide as a jazz master. The internationally recognized trumpeter long ago chose Detroit as his home and he remains among its most celebrated performing artists, an icon to musicians and lovers of jazz everywhere. His energy, artistry, and unwavering dedication to the advancement of music education and performance excellence epitomize the distinguishing qualities of a Kresge Eminent Artist.

Bill Harris, Detroit's distinguished author, literary critic and college educator, has been writing for more than 40 years, winning national acclaim for his poetry, plays, novels, essays and criticism. His plays have received more than 100 productions in the United States. Harris was named as 2011 Kresge Eminent Artist for his commitment to cultivating creative writing talent as a Wayne State University English professor and for his own professional literary contributions as author and playwright. Now professor emeritus, Harris published "Booker T. & Them: A Blues," an examination in long poem form of the era of Booker T. Washington, with Wayne State University Press in 2012. He is working on three new novels.

Award-winning poet, editor, and educator Naomi Long Madgett has nurtured generations of aspiring poets through her teaching, annual poetry award and publishing company. Madgett established Detroit's Lotus Press in 1972, making it possible for other African American poets to publish and distribute their work. Madgett was named a Kresge Eminent Artist in recognition of her deep and abiding commitment to metropolitan Detroit and its literary artists. Now in her ninth decade, this distinguished woman of letters and Detroit poet laureate continues to harness her own talents in the service of others as she edits poetry manuscripts, gives readings and introduces new poets to the public.

About The Kresge Foundation

The Kresge Foundation is a \$3 billion private, national foundation that works to expand opportunities in America's cities through grantmaking and investing in arts and culture, education, the environment, health, human services, community development and in our place-based efforts in Detroit. In 2012, the Board of Trustees approved 410 awards totaling \$130.5 million; \$150.3 million was paid out to grantees over the course of the year. For more information, visit kresge.org.

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Julie Pincus

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Additional Photography

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Pg. 32: CREDIT: MIRA for photo appearing on pg. 32.
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David DiChiera's CD Inside Four Sonnets

(with verses by Edna St. Vincent Millay)

"Time Does Not Bring Relief"

"Loving You Less Than Life, a Little Less"

"I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed"

"What Lips My Lips Have Kissed, and Where, and Why"

Soprano: Leah Partridge

Pianist: Craig Ketter