INTRO FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

HINDSIGHT IS 2020

As I looked back at our artistic output from the past year, I was struck that while I could clearly trace twelve months, it felt like I was unraveling two parallel timelines— one where 2020 went on "as planned", and another that matched our actual reality. Maybe the Netflix show Dark had settled into my psyche too much (an early pandemic binge), but I couldn’t help feeling nostalgic for something that never existed.

I realize that many artists, if not most, have already experienced this sense of withdrawal; for me, I was so intent on marching forward that I don’t think I fully processed what was lost along the way. It finally hit me on our holiday break— the first two weeks since March 16th that weren’t filled with daily office Zooms, and the first winter break that wasn’t occupying my mind with an upcoming project— 2020 was as far from its visionary name as possible. It better matched my nearsightedness, where everything front and center is clear, but the rest is a blur.

The saying goes that hindsight is 20/20, and that’s what I seek to share with you in our 2020 Artistic Summary. We came, we saw, we conquered. Battle-weary and wounded, we didn’t exit with the same rallying cry that we had when we hosted the New Works Forum in January 2020, but our hope and optimism for the future remains, and there, in the distance, the mirage—and magic—of live performance. We’ll get there again, and until then, we’ll do our best to capture its light.
OPERATE America New Works Showcase
January 16
BAM

AOP hosted Spoleto Festival USA and Music-Theatre Group at the Lepercq Space/BAMcafé for OPERA America’s New Works Showcase, featuring three new American works fusing opera and folk: Omar by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels; Marymere by Matthew Schickele; and Hatuey by Frank London and Elise Theron. The Opera Cowgirls performed their lively mashup of country and opera classics between the sets.
AOP held an in-house design workshop of the object-theatre/chamber opera *Precipice*, about a young girl who escapes her 1950s rigidity and discovers her true voice through a surreal American landscape conceived & designed by Susan Rogers, who leads an all-female creative team that includes composer Rima Fand, librettist Karen Fisher and director Mallory Catlett.
**MARCH**

*Eat the Document*
March 11
The Center for Fiction

Debuting on the cusp of the pandemic, AOP and The Center for Fiction presented their inaugural Note/Books series with a libretto reading (including three musical excerpts) of John Glover and Kelley Rourke’s *Eat the Document*, directed by Kristin Marting. Based on the book by Dana Spiotta, the story shifts between the 1970s and the 1990s, exploring the connection between the language, technology, music and activism of the two eras to unravel a secret shared between multiple identities.
APRIL

AOPTV
April 8

In response to the abrupt halt to live performances due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, AOP introduced new and varied digital offerings that continued to connect art with audience despite our physical distance. A trove of archived videos of previous AOP performances, including the world premieres of As One, Harriet Tubman, Three Way and The Echo Drift.

Earth Day 2020 Video
April 22
Fort Greene Park Conservancy YouTube Channel

AOP released a music video, as part of the NYU-Tisch Opera Lab, for the aria "Us" from The Watering Hole (the CLIMATE OPERAS) by Willem Oosthuysen, libretto by Tristen Moseley, featuring Sarah Moulton Faux as Narcissus, directed by Walker Lewis, mixed and edited by Enzo Veiga. It was presented by the Fort Greene Park Conservancy as part of the Earth Day Celebration with support from the NYU Green Grant from the Office of Sustainability, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.
**MAY**

**Living Room Music:**
**A Grateful Embrace**
May 10
AOPTV

A new livestream concert series celebrating artistic diversity and inspiration, including performances of poetry and spoken word, dance, multi-genre musical performances, and original creations. Created by Blythe Gaisser, Laura Kaminsky and Michael Kelly, hosted by Isabel Leonard.

**Semmelweis:**
**Behind the Work**
May 14
AOPTV

Ray Lustig, composer and Matt Gray, General Director at AOP, come together in conversation about the opera *Semmelweis*. Ray and Matt will talk about the history of *Semmelweis*, lessons for our time, and the development of the project. Several early workshops, directed by Matt Gray, were staged with AOP’s support.

**Living Room Music:**
**A New Dawn**
May 17
AOPTV

A new livestream concert series celebrating artistic diversity and inspiration, including performances of poetry and spoken word, dance, multi-genre musical performances, and original creations. Created by Blythe Gaisser, Laura Kaminsky and Michael Kelly, hosted by Dan Butler.

**Poetry & Music Project**
May 17
Facebook Live

As part of Opera Omaha's Poetry & Music Project, 10 poems by Nebraska K-12 poets were selected to be set to original music by composers Matt Browne and Frances Pollock, both alumni of AOP’s Composers & the Voice program! The Poetry & Music Project is presented in partnership with Nebraska Writers Collective, and is supported in part by Humanities Nebraska.
The Scarlet Ibis Watch Party
May 13
AOPTV

AOPTV presents a Watch Party of the 2015 World Premiere PROTOTYPE Festival production of *The Scarlet Ibis*, produced by HERE and Beth Morrison Projects, in association with The American Opera Project.

Lean On Me
The American Song Concert
May 23
AOPTV

AOP was a presenting partner for a new virtual, request-driven concert series produced by The OmniArts Foundation and Estabrooks Entertainment. Hosted by Lori Laitman and Tom Cipullo, this concert benefited freelance artists and the families of essential workers affected by COVID-19, and the charitable organizations providing emergency funds to those in need.

Living Room Music:
An Essential Honor
May 24
AOPTV

A new livestream concert series celebrating artistic diversity and inspiration, including performances of poetry and spoken word, dance, multi-genre musical performances, and original creations. Created by Blythe Gaissert, Laura Kaminsky and Michael Kelly, hosted by Tamara Tunie.

Lean On Me
Jazz, Cabaret, & Musical Theater
May 30
AOPTV

AOP was a presenting partner for a new virtual, request-driven concert series produced by The OmniArts Foundation and Estabrooks Entertainment. Hosted by composer Fred Hersch, this concert benefited freelance artists and the families of essential workers affected by COVID-19, and the charitable organizations providing emergency funds to those in need.
HOLD ON:
A Vigil for Broken Spirits
June 5
AOP TV

Hosted by Adrienne Danrich via Zoom, the audience was led in song, poetry, and meaningful conversation regarding the deep inequities that our nation is facing.

KEEP ON GOING
June 8

AOP, in partnership with our Ft. Greene neighbors at BRIC, brought together cast members and guest singers to sing words set by Nkeiru Okoye, from her opera Harriet Tubman, as a new message of hope dedicated to the doctors, nurses, workers, and patients at The Brooklyn Hospital Center in Ft. Greene, and to all essential workers.

INVITATION TO A DIE-IN
Artist Conversation
June 19

Following the worldwide protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, AOP General Director Matt Gray invited Okoye, Cote, Maestro Ng, and baritones Norfleet and McNichols to reconnect in a video call and reflect on the piece that has, to the sadness of everyone involved, only grown in relevance.
**Letters That You Will Not Get: Women’s Voices from the Great War**

July 5-19

Zoom

At-home Music Workshop (held via Zoom), resulting in a demo recording of the full show, as well as three music videos, all self-recorded by the artists with assistance from engineers.
August

Letters That You Will Not Get Listening Party
August 4
Zoom

Internal listening party in advance of the Working Women Online Tour premiere, featuring excerpts from the July music workshop of Letters That You Will Not Get: Women’s Voice from the Great War.

Formation of Artistic Advisory Council
August

The American Opera Project is pleased to announce the formation of its very first Artistic Advisory Council, consisting of Anthony Roth Costanzo, Alexandra Enyart, Susan Gonzalez, Briana Hunter, J. David Jackson, Laura Kaminsky, Jessie Montgomery, David Michalek, Ravi Rajan, Kimberly Reed, Huang Ruo, and Craig Zobel.
SEPTEMBER

**Songs of Suffrage**
audio/video recording  
September 1-3  
BRIC Arts Media

Audio Recording of AOP’s three Songs of Suffrage: two written by C&V composers —Jessica Rudman, and Tony Soltro with librettist Alice Eve Cohen— and a new commission from composer Kathryn Bostic; Video Recording in Central Park and Fort Greene.

**Briar Patch Watch Party**  
September 19  
Facebook Live / Zoom

The University of Michigan hosted a watch party for their February 2020 workshop of *Briar Patch* (from *Tales from the Briar Patch*) by Nkeiru Okoye (composer) and Carman Moore (librettist). The watch party included commentary by the composer and cast members.

**Working Women:**  
*Songs of Suffering & Suffrage*  
September 24  
Reed College (WA)

Online Tour Stop featuring audio and video from *Letters That You Will Not Get: Women’s Voices from the Great War* and *Songs of Suffrage*.

**First Glimpse**  
audio/video recording  
September 24-25, 28-30  
South Oxford Space

Audio/Video Recording of 20 songs (including 3 in LA) created during the 2019-21 cycle of Composers & the Voice, released during six #FirstGlimpseFridays this fall.
OCTOBER

BOAT FOR THE VOTE
October 23
Gowanus Canal, Brooklyn

The Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club and the Wide Awakes Navy present a flotilla of canoes, and musical performances by Shequida Hall (brought to you by The American Opera Project, Make Music New York, and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs) and the Metropolitan Horn Ensemble.

Working Women: Songs of Suffering & Suffrage
October 26
Nicolaus Copernicus University (Poland)

Online Tour Stop featuring audio and video from *Letters That You Will Not Get: Women’s Voices from the Great War* and *Songs of Suffrage.*

Working Women: Songs of Suffering & Suffrage
October 29
Linfield University (WA)

Online Tour Stop featuring audio and video from *Letters That You Will Not Get: Women’s Voices from the Great War* and *Songs of Suffrage.*
Working Women: Songs of Suffrage
November 2
AOPTV

Online Tour stop "special edition" featuring an in-depth look at Songs of Suffrage.

fermata taping
November 4
BRIC Arts Media

Video Recording of Matt Gray, Mila Henry and Jorell Williams’ video segments for AOP’s fermata gala.

Working Women: Songs of Suffering & Suffrage
November 5
Boston Arts Academy

Online Tour Stop featuring audio and video from Letters That You Will Not Get: Women’s Voices from the Great War and Songs of Suffrage.

Music as the Message
November 8
AOPTV

Livestream Presentation conceived & hosted by Adrienne Danrich that offers an opportunity for everyone to lift up their voices toward healing, laughter, joy, inspiration and community.

Working Women: Songs of Suffrage
November 9
AOPTV

Online Tour Stop featuring audio and video from Letters That You Will Not Get: Women’s Voices from the Great War and Songs of Suffrage.
November (Cont...)

**Working Women: Songs of Suffering & Suffrage**
November 11
Boston Athenaeum

Online Tour Stop featuring audio and video from *Letters That You Will Not Get: Women’s Voices from the Great War* and *Songs of Suffrage.*

**The Christmas Spider**
November 14–15
Amanda + James loft

Audio/Video Recording of four orchestrated excerpts from the show, in collaboration with Soho presenters A+J.

**OPERA America**
**Roadtrip stop**
Zoom

OPERA America crisscrossed the country via Zoom to visit as many opera companies as possible. On November 20th at 6pm they highlighted AOP’s achievements, and how they enrich the national opera landscape.

**The Christmas Spider**
November 21
AOPTV

Online Presentation featuring interviews with Clint Borzoni and John de los Santos, and an inside look at four excerpts from the show.

**Eat The Document**
November 22
Kaufmann Center: Merkin Hall

Audio Recording of “Leave the Memory Behind” from Eat The Document for Big Pup Film “Stage Note” promo video.
DECEMBER

fermata
2020 virtual benefit
December 6
Hopin and aopopera.org

Online Presentation of AOP’s first virtual gala, hosted by Jorell Williams and honoring Angel Blue and Charles Jarden.

Works In Development
Promotional Video Debut
December 6
aopopera.org

The American Opera Project, along with BRIC Arts Media and Big Pup Films, creates 9 promotional videos for our Works In Development and Composers & the Voice.

The Christmas Spider Storybook
December 16
AOPTV

Video Release of a special “storybook” reading of this charming new opera, narrated by Nicole Mitchell and featuring illustrations by Ashley Soliman.

Composers & the Voice
First Glimpse Watch Party
December 18
AOPTV

Online Presentation of all twenty songs created during the first year of Composers & the Voice 2019-21, with the artists in attendance.
PRAISE FOR AOP

I am an Opera enthusiast & unfortunately, due to my disability, I am no longer able to attend the Opera anymore. In a way, covid has become a way for me to reconnect with the theater that I love so much! So I thank you for this amazing opportunity!

AOP TV

STEVEN TETREAULT

It’s hard to elucidate the sheer impact of the setting of the "Sovereign Blackness" line. What amazing composition and performance, especially given the limitations of quarantine!

Reed College Working Women: Songs of Suffering & Suffrage program

MOLLY JO RIVELLI

The arts have helped us all get through this year. Thank you.

Boston Arts Academy Working Women: Songs of Suffering & Suffrage program

KRISTIN JAUTZ

What an amazing production - so thoughtful and so thought-provoking as well as just lovely to listen to and watch.

Boston Athenaeum Working Women: Songs of Suffering & Suffrage program

STELLA DRUMMOND

The delicacy and fragility of both the prose and the music deftly conveys the frailty of the lives we are paying tribute to... Thank you for all the work that went into this performance. It is so complex that it invites several viewings. Brava!!!

Boston Athenaeum Working Women: Songs of Suffering & Suffrage program

BARBARA SUTER
FUNDING & MEMBERSHIP

FUNDING

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MEMBERSHIP

AOP IS A MEMBER OF OPERA AMERICA, FORT GREENE ASSOCIATION, THE DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN ARTS ALLIANCE, THE NEW YORK OPERA ALLIANCE, AND ALLIANCE OF RESIDENT THEATRES/ NEW YORK (A.R.T./NY). THE AMERICAN OPERA PROJECT (AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS, INC.) IS AN IRS RECOGNIZED 501(C)3 NON-PROFIT CORPORATION.