

Key Change Episode 1: Welcome to the Opera House

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

opera, people, feel, stage, experience, art form, production, orchestra, music, hear, toronto, singing, terms, opera house, listening, piece, thinking, theater, long, artist

SPEAKERS

Julie Mclsaac, Robyn Grant-Moran, Angel Blue, Midori Marsh, Johannes Debus, Shary Boyle

Julie Mclsaac 00:15

Hi, everyone, welcome to Key Change: the COC's new podcast exploring everything about opera from a fresh perspective.

Robyn Grant-Moran 00:23

We're your hosts Robyn Grant-Moran...

Julie Mclsaac 00:25

And Julie Mclsaac. To kick off our first season, we're starting at the very beginning. We'll take you through the arc of attending an opera from first opera experiences as audience members, to how we create and hear sound, how we adapt stories for the stage and more.

Robyn Grant-Moran 00:42

In this episode, Julie and I speak with four fascinating people from inside and outside the opera world about their very first time experiencing opera.

Julie Mclsaac 00:51

We chatted with acclaimed soprano Angel Blue, who listeners might remember as Mimì in *La Bohème* at the COC a couple of seasons ago, and also COC Music Director Johannes Debus. Both Angel and Johannes were quite young when they first attended an opera.

Robyn Grant-Moran 01:06

Then we chatted with Midori Marsh, she's in her first season of the Ensemble Studio, the COC's young artist program, and Canadian visual artists Shary Boyle. So they're both relatively new to opera as compared to Angel and Johannes. Both of these two experienced their first opera a little later in life and bring such fascinating insights to the conversation. Julie, I'm really excited for today's episode!

Julie Mclsaac 01:39

Yeah, it's fun to have this opportunity to dive into this, because we've been talking about it now for so long. And it's been weeks and months in the planning. And to now have this opportunity to bring

together all these different pieces, different voices, different perspectives, and then having those be the lens by which we talk about and look at opera.

Robyn Grant-Moran 01:58

Right. And we have so many amazing guests, like you said, so many different perspectives. And I can't wait to talk about everything that they... all their insights and everything they've shared with us.

Julie Mclsaac 02:12

Yeah, and I'm excited because these people are experts in their fields, like in terms of their craft, their artistry, their technical ability. And yet they also bring themselves, like their whole personhood and humanity to the conversation. So we always get that personal story in there as well, whether they're an expert, or whether they're someone who's new to opera.

Robyn Grant-Moran 02:31

The variety of topics we talk about are really pertinent I think, to younger audiences, and people may be starting to get into opera for the first time, or really exploring it. This ain't your grandma's opera podcast.

Julie Mclsaac 02:49

It's like does someone's grandma have an opera podcast? Because...

Robyn Grant-Moran 02:52

I don't know, it's quarantine time. Everybody's starting a podcast right now.

Julie Mclsaac 03:00

Yeah, but you're totally right. It's the sense of... we hope that by listening to this, your grandma feels like she's a part of opera and that you the listener feel like you're a part of it, and that the future of opera is yours to create. So we're here to chat about the past and about the present, and also to look to the future and to invite you into the conversation of what that future will look like. And your grandma, she can come too.

Robyn Grant-Moran 03:23

Please, grandmas are all very welcome.

Julie Mclsaac 03:26

So first, let's hear from Angel Blue about seeing her first opera at just four years old.

Robyn Grant-Moran 03:44

We'll just get right off into it. Um, I hear that your first opera you saw when you were four?

Angel Blue 03:51

Yes.

Robyn Grant-Moran 03:51

Can you tell us a bit about that?

Angel Blue 03:53

Yes, well it wasn't a fully staged production, it was *Turandot* in concert. And we were in Cleveland, Ohio, because my mom is from Cleveland. And at the time, we were visiting her family. And my dad wanted to go to Severance Hall and see a concert, so we went to see this *Turandot* in concert. I don't remember how long it was. I know it wasn't very long. It really was condensed you know, as it wasn't the fully staged production. But I just remember the loud brass music and I remember feeling overwhelmed by the orchestra, you know, just feeling like the power come from the stage of hearing that "dada dada dada dada" from *Turandot* you know, that is a motif that will always be stuck in my head just because it's so I don't know, but probably because it's the first thing that I ever really walked around humming you know, because it meant so much to me when I was a kid listening to it. I remember seeing Turandot sing, and I didn't know it was her. But the big scene that she has, the "In questa reggia," that scene, I just remember her being very bright. And I remember saying to my dad, I said, "Dad, I want to be like the woman in the light." And he said, "you can absolutely be like the woman in the light." And it just... I don't know, that sort of bit me when I was four and it's been with me ever since.

Julie McIsaac 05:34

I'm also... Robyn I might just jump in for a moment, because there's something that Angel said that really moved me. You spoke of being overwhelmed by the orchestra as a young person. And I'm wondering if we could dig into that a little bit more in terms of what that feeling was in your body or your spirit in terms of that encounter with the orchestra?

Angel Blue 05:52

Yeah, for me, it was mainly just the sound. I hadn't heard anything so loud. I hadn't heard anything so loud, so strong, and something that made me cry, you know, I didn't know why I was crying when *Turandot* was singing. I don't remember what it was that made me feel. I know that I had a series of emotions. But you know... at that age, and even to this day, I can't really explain them. I just know that I, I remember when I heard the orchestra, I was just overwhelmed with how the vibration of the seats and everything and just watching people. I can see my dad had this big smile on his face, probably from my reaction. But I just remember how loud it was. And just seeing all of the people on the stage, playing this music and just being enamored really, with especially the brass. I mean, that's what really... I know that now, you know, when I was a kid, I didn't know that's what it was. But it was just this overwhelming sensation of sound. And it came from everyone. It came from every single person who was on the stage, you know, and then when *Turandot* was singing her aria. I do know that I was crying at that point. And I was just fixed on her throughout her entire performance. So I suppose overwhelming for me, if I were to put it in musical terms, is that feeling that we get as musicians when we sort of... It's like that, what is it, the Germans say the *heilige kunst musik*, it's like the highest sort of feeling that one gets from that overwhelming sensation of just being captivated by sound.

Robyn Grant-Moran 07:36

We were wondering what was your first fully staged production or grand opera experience?

Angel Blue 07:44

Well, my parents took me down to...we lived in California. We lived about two and a half hours from Los Angeles Opera when I was growing up in Apple Valley, and I actually ended up making that drive in about an hour and 15 minutes when I turned 16. I'd get down there real quick. But when my parents took me to see... the first opera I really remember after being four years old that I actually saw fully staged was Duke *Bluebeard's Castle* with Samuel Ramey and Denyse Graves, conducted by Kent Nagano, directed by William Friedkin. And I was 15 years old. So I was quite a bit older after seeing my first opera, but that was an interesting experience because of course being directed by William Friedkin, you know, he's the director of *The Exorcist*. But he made a very special part of the opera when (I think her name is Judith? I don't know...) The character's name is Judith, when she finds out that Bluebeard has all of his dead wives in the closet or in some room, and William Friedkin directed it so that there was this big huge ghost that just came down from one end of the Dorothy Chandler to the other side of the stage. And I remember when the ghost came out, and it's just long and stringy and creepy... super great for Halloween. We're in the month of October, so it'd be awesome to see that again. But I could hear the audience go, *gasp*. Because it scared everybody... you know? No, that was a really good experience, actually. And it was Denyse Graves actually gave tickets to my family, so that we could go and see that production. So that was the first real grand opera I remember seeing that I remember more about, you know.

Julie Mclsaac 09:33

I find myself thinking a lot about that interaction that you described with your father, where you said, "I want to be the woman in the light." And he said, "you can absolutely be the woman in the light." Because Robyn and I've been speaking a lot about young people and their exposure to opera and just wondering about... I have a niece who's five and she's never been to an opera before. So I'm thinking a lot about her first experience and how to introduce her to the art form in a way that will hopefully set up a lifelong love or lifelong relationship. And so would you have any advice in terms of parents taking their young people to opera for the first time, or how to prepare them or introduce them?

Angel Blue 10:06

I think the best way is just to let them see it. And not to have you know, kids are so...I mean, I'm a stepmom, I don't have a biological child yet. I'm working on that. But, I feel like kids are... I met my stepson when he was four. And he saw his first opera when he was six, I believe. (Was it six?) Sorry, looking to my husband. When we took him, he came to see me and it was at the Metropolitan Opera, that was my debut at the Metropolitan Opera, I was singing Mimi in *La Bohème*. And we brought him there to see it. And I was, I guess, the answer to my question would be, just let them see it for what it is, I mean, you can explain the story and all of that, you know, but kids are so much more, I believe, so much more uninhibited than we are as adults. Unfortunately, that kind of gets conditioned out of us in some way. And they see things that I believe that we oftentimes don't even realize that they're aware of. So for me, when I took Dean, my stepson to see *La Bohème*, I just knew he was gonna like Act II of *La Bohème*. I thought he was gonna like the horses and there was a donkey on stage. And you know, there was a clown and this guy on stilts, coming in doing tricks. So I just knew that he was going to love... that was going to be his act, Act II. And when the show was over, I asked him, I said, "What was your favorite part of the opera?" and I just knew he was gonna say, Act II. And he was like, "I actually like Act III, because you're in the snow and I can tell that you really are in love with..." And he knew the character's names. "I knew you were really in love with Rodolfo. But it's sad that you kind of go away

from him, and then you come back together, and then you die.” And I was like, “Wait, wait, wait, what about the horses, and all of the circus acts?” And he was like, “Act II, that’s fun, that’s nice.” So I think that... and maybe that’s what my parents did to me is that they just let me experience it. So my advice would be to anyone who wants to go to an opera and introduce their children to an opera, is to be... they’re children and their minds are so open, so much more open than we know. And because of that, I think maybe explaining the story to them, letting them know how long they’re going to be sitting is always a good thing. But just letting them explore within their own selves so that they can experience that on their own and then being, you know, and then being really mesmerized by their minds, by what they tell us afterwards.

Julie Mclsaac 12:54

I wish I could remember who shared this with me but someone once said that when we introduce young people to an art form like that, at an early age, this space opens up within them that they then spend the rest of their life trying to fill. So in the sense that it creates this appetite or creates this positive vacuum of this search for beauty or that search for that overwhelming sensation that you described of being surrounded by the sound.

Angel Blue 13:18

Yes.

Julie Mclsaac 13:19

And also just trusting their capacity to be open.

Angel Blue 13:22

Yes. Exactly, I like that.

Julie Mclsaac 13:24

Yeah. Oh, it’s beautiful. Beautiful. Yeah.

Robyn Grant-Moran 13:27

I was just thinking about... Was it *Sesame Street* that you did that... you explained about being an opera singer? I remember. I love video. Yes, that’s it. I was just thinking that you are probably like that woman in the light for so many kids after you did that spot.

Angel Blue 13:48

Oh, thank you. I hope so. I hope so. I hope they’re encouraged by that. That was a lot of fun to sit with those young kids like that. And I follow most of them on Instagram. And you know, their parents handle their Instagram pages. And it’s crazy to see how quickly they’ve all grown.

Julie Mclsaac 14:03

Wow. Yeah. We’re very curious. Having sung Mimi at the Four Seasons Centre here in Toronto, we’re curious about what were your first impressions of the opera house of walking into the Four Seasons Centre, of singing in that house.

Angel Blue 14:19

First of all, I have to say I was so happy when I touched down in Toronto. I can't even tell you. I came from Italy. I came from Milan. And I landed on March 18 in Toronto, and I was so happy to be there. I just, it was everything for me. I mean, it was probably, I would say the highlight of my 20 (what was that, it was 2018/2019 season). And I just, I had so much joy when I got there probably because my dad used to minister in Canada a lot. He went on *100 Huntley Street* and my parents would always drive up to Toronto from Cleveland. So just for me being in Toronto was a huge deal. Going through the Four Seasons was like, when I first walked in, because I actually didn't first walk in through the backstage area. I went in the front. And when I first walked in, I remember being like, it feels, it feels excuse me, well listen to me talk. It felt like it...felt like it had the atmosphere of sort of, like—please don't be offended by it—but, like a club, you know, because I felt like it was like I was in a club—like, “okay, where's the dance music?” You know, and I really liked that feel of the...of the building. I liked just sort of the I'm specifically speaking I guess of the architecture I like just the way the openness of it: you can see out and see the street, and all of that, you know. Not every Opera House has that where you can actually feel like you're...like you're really a part of the city. Like you're like, “this is the cultural section of the...of the city.” That's a really cool feeling. But the house itself, singing on the stage in the theater, with such a great acoustic, was awesome. You know, having that kind of support from the orchestra; having...feeling like, “Okay, well, I can sing piano in here.” And, you know, my vocal coach was there with me throughout that...that time, and he would go and, like, sit up in the very top balcony, and he'd come back down, like, “You don't have to give any more. It's great. I can hear everything.” I'm like, “Really?” He's like, “Yeah, I can hear you when you breathe.” It's like, “Okay. All right. That's good to know, you know. So that's a great feeling. It was, um, I hope to come back soon.

Robyn Grant-Moran 16:37

Oh, well, we hope you come back, too!

Julie Mclsaac 16:41

And, and you're such a great storyteller to Angel. Like, I feel like I'm with you, like, walking into the building and, like, then into the house. And thanks for walking us through it.

I really loved what Angel said about letting kids explore opera at their own pace, and bringing our attention to the fact that even though they're new to the art form, they have a deep well of knowing and a deep way of experiencing what is on stage before them and what they're hearing. And I find myself thinking about this conversation coming up with Midori, where she's going to touch on something similar about the necessity of making room in the opera conversation for people who we would, at first, perhaps deem to be non-experts.

Robyn Grant-Moran 17:24

Yeah, she tells us about going to an opera early on in her music degree, where she didn't necessarily feel the most welcomed. And that this is...these are perspectives that really ought to be heard.

Julie Mclsaac 17:47

Hi, Midori, thanks so much for joining us today.

Midori Marsh 17:47

Hi, thank you for having me.

Julie Mclsaac 17:52

We'd love to hear about your first experience of live opera.

Midori Marsh 17:57

Sure. My first experience with, like, real life live professional opera was at the Canadian Opera Company. I think I was 18 and my grandma had gotten tickets for me and my dad to go see *La Bohème* at the Four Seasons Centre. I feel like I just kind of went in with a totally fresh perspective. I had an idea of what opera was. But, you know, I'd never really sat down and watched one from front to back. And I totally loved it; it was magical. I mean, I love the performing arts and I love musical theatre, and I love straight theatre. And it was a little closer to those things than I...than I maybe anticipated. You know, it still has that...I mean, it *still* is live theatre: it is still watching people move and feel and connect. So yeah, I don't...I don't know why I was surprised by that. But I think it was just more...it was just so much more human than I thought it was going to be.

Julie Mclsaac 19:05

And I'm wondering if you could talk to us a little bit about coming to see *Falstaff* in 2014, and what that experience was like – to the extent that you feel like you want to share it with us and our listeners.

Midori Marsh 19:17

Mm hmm. Well, I have to say I think that was my second year of university so I had more opera experience under my belt. I mean, if anyone's listening who did an undergrad in voice performance, you probably didn't do a lot of opera your first year – I know I didn't, but I learned about it and I got to see the opera at school, and I had seen [*La*] *Bohème* and so I think it was kind of near the beginning of my second year that we went to see *Falstaff* at the COC – which I loved, by the way. I...I have such a strong image of that big yellow kitchen; I love that big yellow kitchen. But what I remember most about that trip actually had nothing to do with *Falstaff*: we like got bussed over from Waterloo into the city, and it's always so fun coming into the city and like the buildings just start to get taller and taller, and everything starts to turn into chrome, and we get out in front of the Four Seasons Centre, and there's this huge poster up on the side of the Four Seasons Centre for a show that was coming up that they were doing, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. And it was a woman in, like, what...what was supposed to represent, kind of, traditional Japanese dress. And I was like, "Oh, my gosh, like...like, is that...is that a white woman in yellow face?" I was like, "what is going on?" And I felt like, you know, in, like, a horror movie when the main character can, like, see a ghost and no one else can see the ghost. And they're like, "Oh my god, do you guys see that? Like, it's just, like, some spooky, headless woman over there. And everyone's like, "Oh, what are you talking about?" I was like, "Oh, ah!" Yeah, that just totally struck me and now as someone who's been doing opera for, I guess, close to a decade – which seems crazy – I'm like, I...I look back and I can't believe how surprising that was to me because of how little I knew about, you know, the way opera kind of *works*, I guess. But yeah, I was really surprised by that.

Julie Mclsaac 21:38

Yeah, thank you for sharing that, Midori, and also for...for drawing that illustration so clearly around, like, the experience of it's like, "I'm seeing a ghost and no one else is seeing it" and the discombobulation or the isolation in that moment – in that very powerful moment.

Robyn Grant-Moran 21:54

So, when you saw the poster for such a well-loved opera like *Madame Butterfly* – and you described such an alienating sort of experience – I'm wondering if, at that moment, if you had planned already to go into opera specifically, and what drove you to keep going with it?

Midori Marsh 22:19

I mean, there's so much about it that makes me love it and there's so much about it I want to change. I think that that was sort of a beginning or a catalyst for these thoughts because, you know, if this is an industry I want to stay in, I have to have these thoughts: I feel like it's my responsibility to have these thoughts, especially as someone...(I mean, I'm a very Western person; I consider myself and I also have a lot of white privilege, I have to acknowledge that in so many ways. Like, the opera industry was built around that and built for me in a lot of ways.) This was, like, a really small window into the ways that it's not for me and it's not for so many other people in...in more intense ways and in more harmful ways. Like, yeah, it was like this little glimpse into that unfortunate reality. I think sometimes it feels, like, whatever you do in life, you have to decide every day that that's what you want to do. And I hope to decide every day to want to sing opera, and I hope to decide every day to try and make the opera space a better one for people who would feel alienated by that poster and for people who are alienated in more ways than that, and in... in really aggressive ways from this industry.

Robyn Grant-Moran 23:52

Can you tell me a little bit more about changes you'd like to see or things that you do in your day-to-day practice? To be more...to sort of facilitate those changes that you need, or want, to see?

Midori Marsh 24:11

Oh, that's such an overwhelming question.

Robyn Grant-Moran 24:15

Yes, sorry. It's a big one. I know.

Midori Marsh 24:18

It's okay. It's just, like... it just feels like something that one person – especially someone like myself, who holds a lot of privilege – I just feel like I can't answer alone and I would never want to answer alone. But, um, I think... I think so much of it is... it's just about changing attitudes and doing a lot of personal learning and growth at every, like, at every level in the industry. I think there's this attitude of, like, "Oh, these marginalized communities need us. They need us. So we'll offer a hand because they need our help." And it's like, "No, the *industry* needs *their* help." Like, we need the help of those communities. We need to reach community and build community to make art that is effective and long-lasting. Like, I mean, even if it's... even if we view it as totally symbiotic, we have to view it that way, as opposed to viewing it as, like, a... in a tokenistic way, or as an act of charity. It's not, you know. Like, big companies are lucky that artists of minority experience are ready to do that work and are, in some cases, even offering. Like, companies should be jumping on that chance in the most healthy way

and in a way where those artists are compensated to, like, the best of the company's ability. I think it's so overwhelming to think, like, "What can... What can I do?" as opposed to, "What can I lend myself to? What can we do? What can we build together?"

Robyn Grant-Moran 26:05

Yeah, it is really a community effort and you really highlighted – and, I think, beautifully – how much – what it... and it was what I was trying to get at as well – as, like, how much, as a BIPOC artist, how much responsibility falls on us. Thank you for really beautifully, sharing your experience around that.

Julie Mclsaac 26:28

Something you were saying earlier, Midori, reminded me of my early music education in my undergrad, and how I had this great music history prof, Dr. Alan Gilmore, who really emphasized the connections between the visual art of the time and the literature of the time and the political movements of the time and how that made its way onto the opera stage and influence the composers and the librettists of the day. And I, like you're saying, I was, like, "We need – in order to grow as an art form in order to remain relevant and vital and alive – to be something that's alive. It's, like, this artform needs to be learning from what's around us: in the city, in the community. Otherwise, it's hard to make an argument for our ongoing existence or, or that's a conversation we need to have.

Midori Marsh 27:10

Definitely. It's such a disservice that we do ourselves to make anyone feel like they're not welcome, because the most amazing voice you've ever heard in your life can come from anywhere. I mean, that person didn't have to study at Juilliard. They don't even have to be technically perfect. But we do ourselves such a massive disservice by... by turning people off from this work and not letting them find their voice. When... when they do feel that drive to... like to... to close people off from that possibility. In a lot of my daily interactions people don't necessarily *other* me, or, if they do, it's so micro-aggressive that I kind of, like, tune it out. And it's... it's not an experience that I would say, like, plagues my daily life. And so that poster was, like, a little bit of a, "Hey, don't get too too comfortable because this stuff is still going on and people still believe in this practice and they still believe it's okay. They'll tell you to your face they think it's okay. I... I have beef with Madame Butterfly. And, I mean, that is just such an ingrained part of opera history. So it's like, "Okay, if that... if that has such a stronghold in this industry, what kind of hold do I have?" You know, I... I feel like I can't contest a piece of music that's been popular for as long as that's been popular. But I sure don't like it. I sure have been with it. And it just reminds me that I have to... I have to be a listener and I have to... I just always have work to do on myself. And then hopefully that internal work I can put out into the industry and be a good force in... in the opera space.

Julie Mclsaac 29:15

Great, Midori. It's so grateful to have you here. I'm curious about, like, what you said about wanting to believe in it and, like, the love that you do have – if you have it – and when you feel it. If you could share a little bit with us about those moments that keep you coming back – those moments that keep the flame alive, and that keep the belief alive that we're moving toward something that you can and want to believe in or where you've had the... the sparks around that.

Midori Marsh 29:45

Yeah, it's easy to believe in something that I feel connected to. When I watch my friends make a piece of art, when I watch my colleagues work and put themselves into it, I believe in that. I think, you know – I mean, this is what everyone says, but there's a kernel of truth and in the fact that – opera does encompass these huge emotions and these big human experiences that can be so touching it, it sucks to have anything get in the way of that. And I feel like a lot of what goes on in this industry gets in the way of communicating that human feeling to a human audience member, you know. Like, it... I feel like people feel like they have to jump through hurdles or have a frickin degree in music theory to come see an opera. I believe in creating a space that everyone feels comfortable in. I believe in listening to music, no matter what your, like, comprehension level is. An analysis that comes from someone who's never heard the piece before and is not into classical music at all is just as important to me as an analysis from an expert; everyone has ears, everyone has an...a... you know, their opinions about it. I just think that things can feel really one note at the moment – music pun! – and people feel like... you know, in musical theater, if you think, “Oh, *The Music Man*'s not for me; I'm going to check out *Hamilton*.” I think, in opera, people get told that they don't understand what they're listening to, that makes them feel like they don't get it, and they feel like, “Okay, this is all one way; no one's going to explain it to me, and I don't feel welcome here. I'm not going to listen to it.” But if we could offer them a broader range and cultivate this feeling of, like, “Hey, you know, come on in, you don't have to be an expert, you don't have to wear a gown, but you're totally free to wear town.” Yeah.

Julie Mclsaac 32:08

Yeah, thank you for sharing that Midori. It's lovely to get insight into the vision that people have for the future of the art form.

Robyn Grant-Moran 32:23

What was really profound to me was Midori's experience with representation and seeing this non-Asian artist featured as Asian and how common and socially acceptable *yellowface* can still be.

Julie Mclsaac 32:45

Yeah, it also strikes me: the... the importance of treating every individual's experiences as unique, and not lumping together people of a certain group or of a certain community; that Midori can be someone who had that negative reaction and that negative experience. And, yet, she can also hold a deep love of the art form. Like, her experience is comprised of these two potentially contradictory things and then she is actively engaged in mission or this work to... to break down systems that aren't working for us and to open things up for people. But I'm just really struck to the way that a person can encompass multitudes; can encompass the positive – like the best things of the artform – and know the worst things of the art form at the same time.

Robyn Grant-Moran 33:31

I feel like that comes with having a really deep love of something, where, to hold it so closely, you have to really understand everything about it. And a lot of times that includes some of the ugly stuff, too.

Julie Mclsaac 33:49

Right. Yeah. And by virtue of, you know, looking to the past and... and also clocking the way our relationships have changed vis-à-vis the material that we see represented on stage, and doing all we can now to engage with those important questions and, yet, also knowing that the next generation that's going to follow us. Like, I love how... how much Maduro is rallying, like, her generation, in terms of the movement forward, but we also need to be open to the fact that the next generation is going to reflect on us, reflect on what we were talking about in 2020 and what we were creating. And they're going to have judgments and opinions and feelings about it, and we don't quite know yet to the extent whether we have failed or succeeded. You know, we'll have to see how... how we stand the test of time.

Robyn Grant-Moran 34:33

Yeah, I was just going to say only time is going to tell with that one. We're at this really critical point, I think, with all the reckoning that's coming – that COVID has really allowed us to have – where we have time to step back and reflect on all these things. And I feel like Midori's message was very powerful before but she's in a certain zeitgeist right now that I'm really excited to see where this goes.

Julie Mclsaac 35:04

Yeah. And it's... it's interesting. Like, speaking about people holding multitudes within them: it might surprise our listeners to know that COC Music Director Johannes Debus also had a not-so-good first opera experience for an entirely different reason. So here he is: COC Music Director Johannes Debus

Julie Mclsaac 35:35

Johannes. We'd love it if you could tell us about your first time experiencing opera.

Johannes Debus 35:43

Okay, so let's roll back in time quite a bit, and I must have been 10 years old, or something, and my parents said, "Oh, tonight we're going to the opera." I have to admit that at that time, opera was a bit of a stranger to me: other music was much closer to my heart, so to speak. Anyway, I... yeah, I decided, "I should give it a try" and why not going with my parents and my siblings, so, we went. It was in a city about... it was, like, a 45-minute drive to that city from where we lived. So, it was... it was kind of a family... trip of sorts, you know. And then we got into that theatre. It was all exciting – I have to say that – remembering the lights going down, smelling the special scent that's in the air in every theatre - there's something special about it, when you enter a theatre space, as if, I don't know, as if the theatre itself would be some kind of living creature. It seems to breathe and seems to have a certain, can we say, flare or perfume or aura. I would say it comes with a characteristic smell. Maybe it's sort of the old curtain or whatever how old the theatre is that helps. Anyway. So then, you probably want to know what kind of opera it was. It was Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, which I would say is...is... it's a good piece to start opera with because the music, I feel, I find, is very accessible and it's very rich. The story, maybe for a 10-year-old, leaves you with some question marks or you do not get everything, of course, but yeah, it's, you know, it's... it's a good piece anyway. I still love it. But I had great problems with that production and the very few things I remember are sort of the things that I at that time didn't like that much. I believe that the production team at that time, and it was a bit common with that piece to try to update it in a way that you... you would say, "Oh, it's playing sort of in the Middle East and you put a spotlight on the many conflicts that are existing in that region" or...

Julie Mclsaac 38:56

The contemporary tensions or?

Johannes Debus 38:57

Exactly! And... and then you know, you easily get into... into having a military Jeep on stage and I'm not sure if... if that's the core of the piece – I would doubt that. I'm not saying that you cannot bring a military Jeep on stage. But if that is sort of the only mean of interpretation, or the only point – or the main point – you want to make with that piece, I think you missed something. Anyway, so, I think I got home with my parents. And I was not asking them, “Hey, when are we going to go back to the opera?” It was not... it was not the perfect experience for me.

Julie Mclsaac 39:50

I'm curious, Johannes, when you left with your parents to take the voyage, the journey to the opera house, do you recall what your expectations were? What you were expecting versus what your experience was when you actually got there?

Johannes Debus 40:03

I cannot clearly remember that, but a certain idea of “it has to be something really special. If not magical, something that is unlike anything I had seen before.” And right, you know, now I... I would definitely say that's exactly what it is and it can happen, and it should happen, and I would say, that's the great thing about opera, that, when it happens, when all those elements – the music, the visuals, the... the text, the acting – when all of that somehow makes sense and comes together, it... it really becomes this incredible *wunderburg* – it's like a miracle, you know. And it, it can really transform you in certain ways. It can... it can actually give you so much food in a way for your, you know, where your emotion... food for emotion, for emotion for your emotional center. But also it can give you food for thought. I think some of the best experiences when we go to theaters – it might be opera, it might be drama, or ballet or any performing art, or maybe even any art; I think we should really include every artform – the best experiences for me are the ones where I leave with still having some questions. So it keeps me... keeps me busy, keeps me thinking, keeps me going, and then, hopefully, at some point arriving somewhere.

Robyn Grant-Moran 42:01

Do you think growing up in Europe made a difference to your exposure and developing your appreciation for opera?

Johannes Debus 42:09

I mean, I... I would say... I would say at least you have more access to it, clearly – you have more direct access to it in Europe than maybe in other parts of the world. But I don't think that because of having more access to it, you automatically will love it more or deeper than maybe someone who does not have that same access. Sometimes, you know, if you live... if you kind of live in abundance, you don't actually cherish what you have, you don't see it, you know. You take it for granted and, for someone who does not have this form of abundance, it's... it's even more so precious and holy and dear and important. But, in a certain way, I would say it might help you to to collect some experience and, through that, to gain some perspective. And to be able to maybe then put certain things in... in

context. Yeah, that... that might be sort of a positive aspect of growing up in this kind of... in this kind of density of operatic activities.

Robyn Grant-Moran 43:49

I love that Johannes had this negative first experience but it didn't turn him off of opera forever.

Julie Mclsaac 43:57

Yeah, I think about that a lot because it breaks my heart to think someone might come for a first time and have a negative experience for who knows... who knows what: maybe it was raining and then they sat all day in their wet sweater and they got cold as they sat and watched the three hours. But it breaks my heart to think that some people might have that first negative experience and not return. And also we're keen for our listeners to know that there's no one type of audience member: there's no one right way to attend or to listen to opera; everyone's going to have a different experience. And different people bring different things to their experience in terms of how they're able to describe it, too, which is super cool. I'm thinking about Shary Boyle, who we're gonna hear from next.

Robyn Grant-Moran 44:35

So Shary Boyle is a visual artist. She's known for working in a range of media including sculpture, painting, installation and drawing, and she's been exhibited all over the world. But she didn't see her first opera until 2010, here at the COC,

Julie Mclsaac 44:51

And I think she's a great example of someone who can come in from a completely different world, completely different field of practice, in terms of her visual art, and just have such a rich experience, a nuanced experience, as a newcomer to the art form that in turn illuminates our understanding. So as people who work within the artform and know it, she opened up a whole new way of listening and seeing, to me.

Robyn Grant-Moran 45:13

So let's hear from visual artists Shary Boyle. So Shary, thank you for joining us today.

Shary Boyle 45:26

Thank you for having me.

Robyn Grant-Moran 45:28

I was wondering if you could tell us a bit about yourself in your artistic practice.

Shary Boyle 45:32

Oh, I'm a visual artist that lives here in Toronto and have based much of my practice here since the very late 90s. I've been involved in performance through Canada and internationally as well as sculpture, drawing, painting. So, usually, my work would be presented in a gallery or museum context, but I've also had a long history with working in theatres or community centres or anywhere that kind of a stage and people gather to see live experimental theatre that involves music, and my part would be overhead projections.

Robyn Grant-Moran 46:13

And, I was wondering, how did you first become interested in opera? What made you decide to see one for the first time?

Shary Boyle 46:20

I honestly was never interested in opera. I have no family relationship to the art form, no formal education or experience with it. As a child, I grew up in Scarborough, there was no access or anyone in my, you know, social circle that had ever gone. So it was just outside of my realm. It wasn't until early in 2000s that I was offered a ticket through a friend of mine, who had a box for the season – Sarah Milroy, who's an art critic and involved in the arts – and she invited me in 2010 to see *Aida*, and I went completely blindly; I didn't look up any of the kind of story behind it, I was really mostly... most of my experience with durational art had been experimental film, you know, sitting in dark theatres for hours watching somebody's grinding vision. So, I was... I was really interested in the durational part, but I really didn't know what to expect.

Julie Mclsaac 47:29

That's cool. I was just wondering about what your expectations would have been going in for the first time and that durational piece is really interesting, particularly when I think about Wagner and about those epically long operas. And that's such a formative piece of it for people.

Shary Boyle 47:43

I think it's huge!

Julie Mclsaac 47:44

Yeah! And so how did that compare, then, with your experience of seeing *Aida* back in 2010 – your first opera. What... what happened for you?

Shary Boyle 47:52

Well, I don't think you can underestimate how much of a kind of physical feeling of being in, you know, a theatre for that long might affect people's perception of what that art form might be if they have zero experience, but that's what they've heard. What I was amazed by, was because I was so lucky to see that performance as a first exposure. And Sondra Radvanovsky – am I pronouncing that right?

Julie Mclsaac 48:23

Yeah, Radvanovsky.

Shary Boyle 48:25

Yeah, she was singing that night. And I had no about her, about anything. I... I completely just can say that I lost time. I have no conception or memory of the time that passed during the experience because I was so immediately riveted as a fellow performer but also an audience member to the experience of being in this incredible acoustic situation where somebody who had such athletic and emotional prowess in their vocal cords was giving something to me, you know, in the same space, like only feet away, really. If she was... She gave such a profound performance and I was so deeply moved, that I

have no memory of how long that took. And I honestly was... had very visceral, emotional, ecstatic experiences that ranged from wanting to sob out loud with just, like, almost the tension of something so beautiful happening in front of me. And then also wanting to, like... I kept wanting to throw myself off the balcony in, like, excitement, because... and it's funny because Robin's dog's named Lemmy and I actually saw a Motörhead concert with Slayer, back in the 90s, and I was... there was a balcony when these bands were on and I had the same visceral experience and people at that show were... actually were launching themselves off the balcony. In stage dives. Nobody was hurt. It's another time. It's crazy. But that kind of physical, visceral experience when something moves you and kind of chemically alters you almost.

Julie Mclsaac 50:08

Yeah! Well... And I love the description of the *physical* that you're going into it as well. And it also reminds me of the fact that the atmosphere we associate with an opera house today isn't necessarily the atmosphere of an opera house 200-300 years ago – like, this raucous or this more embodied response to the music – it's really interesting to think about that on a... on a spectrum of time, on a continuum...

Shary Boyle 50:30

Sure.

Julie Mclsaac 50:30

... the early days of the... of the form. And I'm also curious particularly because of the fact that you're a visual artist, and you work in a... in a visual medium, what your response was to the *visual* language of the production – to the aesthetic of... of this particular production, Tim Albery's production?

Shary Boyle 50:47

Well, I... that was also my first, you know... people coming into the artform, it's such a Eurocentric form, it's such a kind of sense of like decadence and kind of an almost... you can have an assumption of a past kind of antiquated artform: "is it going to be stuffy? Is it going to be hard to access?" And so it was interesting that the first one I saw was kind of contemporary design. So it was, you know, that it was translated into a different moment in time as opposed to more traditionalist. So I was very interested in that as an artist in the interpretation, and the translation, and those kind of questions that a director or a stage designer would ask themselves of how they wanted to bring that story to the stage. So I was thinking about that but I didn't have an overly familiar relationship to the story. So I couldn't do any comparison or anything, because I'm sure, you know, that's the interesting thing about opera, from what I understand: people that go over the course of their life really do have these long comparative relationships, seeing the same stories that they've grown accustomed to over and over again. I think that the form – and I want to give great credit to Alexander Neef because, at that time, it was 2010, and I had a large solo exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario on, right then, he had just recently come to the city and he had brought his young daughter to the exhibition, and he had reached out to me after this – I believe he already knew Sarah Milroy – and invited me to come back to the opera and to come again and again. And my relationship that developed to the form really directly came from his encouragement and kind of cross disciplinary interest in bringing somebody from a visual artform, and kind of reaching

out to a city that he wasn't from and getting more people interested in a form that they might not have known. So he... that was a very smart connection, because the visuals, of course, are my language, and the narrative is also incredibly important to me, through the kind of theatre work that I've done, or just my personal interest in story. But the lighting, the costume, the color, the dirt, you know, the... the sound. And then it's definitely been touching on the symphony and the live instrumentation, right? So it's a multi sensory experience.

Robyn Grant-Moran 53:06

I was totally lost in what Shary was saying.

Shary Boyle 53:12

Just respond, yeah!

Robyn Grant-Moran 53:13

I'm really curious where you said, you mentioned going to a Motörhead concert and a Slayer concert. So you know the atmosphere of a rock concert versus... versus going to an opera house. I am... obviously my dog is named after Lemmy Kilmister, I'm a big Motörhead fan... fan, as well. And I'm very aware, opera does come with its baggage. Did you find... did you have any expectations about walking into that opera house for the first time as to what you might encounter?

Shary Boyle 53:49

I think that's something that I find even through being an artist – and this happens in art museums and galleries – is the intimidation factor. And that has to do with class and accessibility, and who's felt traditionally welcome, and excluded or included. So that has all sorts of things to do with, as we know, every... every single kind of identity that you might claim can be either brought in or left out. For myself – as I was from a real working class family, and I didn't have that kind of cultural education as a child and I didn't have that relationship to opera – of course, I would have had the regular assumptions of it being a kind of expensive and class-driven artform that was super European in a way that I wasn't, you know, culturally associated with. So maybe some of that would have kind of kept it off my radar because I was always looking for more community and kind of viscerally driven, like, authentic experience that was super inclusive. That said, I can draw a lot of parallels between that Slayer show and the opera, in terms of the audience being so deeply invested in a particular artform, knowing it so, so well – like having such a strong personal experience with all of the kind of details of each note in each song and each lyric and... and each individual playing on that stage; having these really, really emotional and kind of profound almost prayer-like relationships that... that honor the artist and kind of have a ritualistic experience of being... gathering together with other people that really, really respect a form and kind of having a... an emotional kind of cathartic. It... just being so happy to be in that room to... to hear something. And, you know, the only difference is headbanging!

Robyn Grant-Moran 55:56

I would love to see that in the Four Seasons Centre!

Shary Boyle 55:59

Oh my god, the hair, like, all in synchronized, like, beautiful!

Robyn Grant-Moran 56:05

That would be incredible!

Julie Mclsaac 56:06

Something I'm thinking about is the fact that that production of *Aida* was quite controversial at the COC because a lot of folks, like you said, who had a tradition, a relationship with a piece that they'd seen over time, we're expecting the grandiose, the pomp, that you know, the grand sets and costumes and elephants paraded across the stage, whereas this version was, you know... the psychology and the emotion of it was there, but it was stripped down – like, a more minimalist production than we might see, you know, at other times. And, so, I'm curious about – if you haven't already mentioned it – what got you coming back? Like what was the...

Shary Boyle 56:41

Well, the experience of being in the room when someone's singing to that level, like the kind of Olympian like excellence of the voice – that was just so uncanny and profound to be in the room. So that was... I needed to experience that more because it really activated kind of... something in my neural pathways that really was zinging, you know, in a really... like, I left the theater, almost disembodied and also wanting to recreate those sounds in my own head, like going back onto the subway afterwards, like, trying not to try to sing opera on the subway.

Julie Mclsaac 57:20

Yeah, great. I think we just have a few more minutes here left. I'm wondering, Robin, if you want to want to take us home with a last question or two.

Robyn Grant-Moran 57:28

All right. My final question is: where can our audience find you, Shary?

Shary Boyle 57:34

Aww, that's nice. Um, well, I will be having my own big solo show coming up in February, the first week of February at the Gardiner Museum here in Toronto, across the street from the Royal Ontario Museum. And that will be opening I think, February 5th. And before then I'm working... that's something I've been working on for almost two years, so it's a huge production. Before then you can visit my website sharyboyle.com. You can put it in the show notes.

Julie Mclsaac 58:04

Yeah, no, folks, go check it out! Yeah. And thank you for sharing your time with our art. And now it would be lovely for us to spend some time with your art. Did that make sense? Did I reverse it?

Shary Boyle 58:13

No, it completely makes sense. And I've been so inspired by theatre that my exhibition is very much on the themes of the theatre, they'll even be walking through the back wings onto a stage, you know, and get to look at a museum through a whole completely different performative lens. So it's definitely a cross-disciplinary time in Toronto.

Robyn Grant-Moran 58:47

That was such an interesting interview. I really love chatting with Shary.

Julie Mclsaac 58:51

Me, too!

Robyn Grant-Moran 58:53

She was great! I really resonated with the idea when she said she went to the... to the Slayer and the Motörhead concert, she had this sort of transcendent experience. And then she went to the COC and had a similar transcendent experience. And I myself grew up... opera was sort of my bad girl, rebellious music: I listened to a lot of metal, I listened to a lot of... a lot of rock music, and I wasn't necessarily someone that I would have considered a conventional opera audience; it was "I'm going to sneak away and listen to Saturday Afternoon at the Opera".

Julie Mclsaac 59:31

Oh, I love it. You're sneaky, rebellious.

Shary Boyle 59:34

That was... that was how I rebelled!

Julie Mclsaac 59:37

Love it. I find myself thinking about what Shary shared about that feeling of almost wanting to throw herself off the balcony. Like, being so overcome and how Angel talked about the overwhelming impact of the music, too. And Johannes talked about being sort of entranced and swept up into everything and it's reminding me about how we receive the music in our bodies, right? In terms of the way sound travels in the air and the way it impacts us. And that's a good reminder for me in the sense of, like, we need to be careful about this gatekeeping that we're doing – either purposefully or inadvertently – because at the end of the day, the prerequisite for appreciating opera is: are you human? And who's to say animals might enjoy it, too?

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:00:20

Exactly. And like, you can get that transcendent.... Anybody can have that transcendent state in a vast array of venues. So I would hope that the opera house can feel really inclusive and inviting to all kinds of people so that they can have the potential to this incredible physical experience, like everyone spoke about – like I've experienced and I'm sure you've experienced too. Because we wouldn't be here having this conversation if neither of us had that.

Julie Mclsaac 1:00:53

Totally. And I'm curious, Robin: like, what's your take on people preparing for the opera or, like, our feeling... this feeling that we should give them all this information ahead of time in terms of the plot and the musical structures in order to enhance their experience? Like, what's your take on that in... in the sense of if that's a beneficial thing to do, or if that's, like, an overwhelming or patronizing thing to do that could, in fact, turn them off?

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:01:18

That's a good question. I'm kind of of two minds about it. Actually. If we're looking to something that's really super historically accurate – I'm thinking back to *Turandot*, this past season, where there was a lot of hand gestures used that was very reminiscent of a very particular style of opera.

Julie Mclsaac 1:01:44

Yeah, the Robert Wilson production.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:01:46

Yeah, exactly. Thank you. Um, how it might seem really odd without that context. However, *drama is drama is drama*, like. So if you over prepare, it might get a little academic, too.

Julie Mclsaac 1:02:07

Also, you know, and when we do prepare, if we choose to present resources to the audience ahead of time – whether that's in the program, or whether that's on the website – we also risk preparing them in a way that doesn't end up being the most useful thing to them. In the sense of Angel's stepson: like, she said, she's like, "I really thought he was going to go for *these* things..."

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:02:25

Exactly.

Julie Mclsaac 1:02:25

...and, In fact, what he took away and what really held his attention was something completely different than what I'd anticipated."

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:02:31

Yeah, like, we're trying to... when we put program notes, or we do pre-show chats, we're trying to manage expectations in a sense.

Julie Mclsaac 1:02:40

Yeah, yeah.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:02:42

And I don't... giving context is really important. However, we can be managing people's expectations completely inappropriately.

Julie Mclsaac 1:02:54

Yeah. Well, it's interesting: I find myself, you know... if I'm a stage director on a production or if I'm a dramaturg on a production, I'm going to prepare in very different ways. So if I'm approached about directing a project, something that's very important to me is that I do have an emotional reaction to the content. So if I listen to that score in my heart, something doesn't call up to my heart, and to my emotional physical being, then it's gonna... I feel like it's going to be very difficult for me to do that work justice, in terms of guiding a creation process and a rehearsal process through that. But if something grabs me – that's certainly a prerequisite emotionally – but then I will do all, like, you know, all the needy ("that 'the needy'". Often this is my combination of "nerdy and geeky", came out as "needy"

[about] all that work) then I will dig in – like, I will dig in. And I love looking at letters, like correspondence between the composer and the librettist, for example.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:03:43

Yes.

Julie Mclsaac 1:03:44

...work. Or, if you can get that personal firsthand account of what was in the zeitgeist at the time that it was being created – I find that really juicy and fun in order to then approach it as a reinterpretation here and now. So, but we'll... we'll chat with stage directors, you know, hopefully further in our season of podcasts, we'll get more into the nitty gritty of how stage directors participate and prepare for opera production.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:04:06

And that totally brings me to one of the criteria that I do that makes me look at the program notes ahead of time: if it's a difficult production, and so if there are issues of representation, or there are tropes that are no longer appropriate, and maybe never should have been appropriate, I want to read about what the company has done to reflect this. Are they... are they trying to dismantle something?

Julie Mclsaac 1:04:41

Right.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:04:41

How is that being handled? Did they bring in consultants? Did they talk to the community that is impacted by this? That's one of the really, really important things for me. As well as then if you're getting into more of the avant garde or really modern style of direction...

Julie Mclsaac 1:05:02

Mhmm...

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:05:02

...that relies heavily on some academic knowledge.

Julie Mclsaac 1:05:07

Yeah. Or there's a very intense reinterpretation that's happening.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:05:11

Yes, exactly.

Julie Mclsaac 1:05:13

Corollaries can help. Yeah. Yeah. And it's... it's interesting, too, because I like getting a sense that there's been a lot of deep thought on the part of the creative team in terms of the choices they're

making. And, at the same time, I acknowledge that the audience is 50% of the meaning making – so the act of creating meaning is only complete once the audience attends and lends themselves as the receivers, the interpreters as well. So it's this... it's an interesting balance between purposefully creating meaning and, yet, knowing that there's got to be this openness to it because the audience is going to read in and interpret their own experiences as they receive what is on stage before them and what they're hearing. So it's a... it's an interesting balancing act between the known and the unknown, and the controlled and the uncontrollable.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:05:59

Absolutely. And I know if I can't see myself on that stage in some way, well, I can't engage the same way that I can if I can imagine myself in the story.

Julie Mclsaac 1:06:14

Mhmm...

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:06:14

And that can be really challenging in a city like Toronto, where we have such an incredibly diverse population. Yeah, I'd like I really like knowing that the directors have and the creative team and everything that's gone into making a production happen, has really carefully considered the audience as being 50%, like you said, of the experience.

Julie Mclsaac 1:06:46

Yeah. Yeah. And I'm finding connections between that and the fact that Johannes saw this modern reinterpretation that he didn't care for, and Shary saw a modern reinterpretation, in terms of the *Aida*, that she loved. So, it's that... not that those were – Johannes is speaking about a different production that he'd seen – but that the... again, that no two audience members are going to experience it in the same way. And it also strikes me, Robin, like, you and I are just talking about, like, the act of first attending or the act of preparing for it, preparing to receive – so, right before that downbeat. Like, we're still at the very beginning of this journey, like, I'm so excited, all series, to talk to people and to talk to one another about this, because we're just scratching the surface, you know? We're just in that very first moment, like, "Maestro, to the pit! Maestro, to the pit!" We're still there, right? And there's already so much to talk about!

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:07:33

That's... that's what I love about opera and why I'm so excited about this podcast: that we could dig into all this, really... the minutiae of everything that makes these productions so incredibly spectacular and moving.

Julie Mclsaac 1:07:49

Totally. Can I ask you a question, Robin?

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:07:52

Sure.

Julie Mclsaac 1:07:53

So, what do you find most interesting about opera? Like, if you had to sort of boil it down to one thing – in terms of why you attend, like, why you show up at the opera house – like, what would that be?

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:08:07

How hyper dramatic every... like, everything is so heightened! And there's just... it's, yeah, the... the drama just blows me away and the almost Olympian, sort of athleticism...

Julie Mclsaac 1:08:27

Yeah!

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:08:28

... that's required to mount these productions, to have these people to sing over operas. I mean, "over opera" – oh, my gosh, we've been saying "opera" so much, I feel like we should start a drinking game.

Julie Mclsaac 1:08:42

Over orchestra.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:08:43

Yeah, to sing *over an orchestra*. Like, that athleticism is... is just astounding. How about you?

Julie Mclsaac 1:08:51

Uh, there's so many things. And one of the things I'm really drawn to is a lot of our listeners referenced, like, their senses – like, their sensory experience. Like, Johannes spoke about the smell. And, like, Angel really spoke about her, like, bodily sensations. And I think that's it, too, is that I feel it just really... like, you know, that thing of, like, you get goosebumps and your hair stands on end, like, you know, the back of your neck. And I just feel like it really calls out to my whole person. Like, the full dimensions of who I am physically. And, in this way, I have to say that sometimes the experiences in rehearsal can be really, really exciting because you're so close when you're in the rehearsal hall. But, that being said, there's nothing like the orchestra: there's nothing like being in a really beautiful opera house with the orchestra. And the synthesis – that's the other thing, the powerful synthesis.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:09:36

Mmm, yeah.

Julie Mclsaac 1:09:37

All the... all the artisans, and craftspeople, and the orchestra, and the chorus, and the soloists, and "just knowing the mammoth task that it is to put all those resources together and to get everyone rowing in the same direction," I think is something Alexander tends to say and it's very true: it's a lot of coordination and human effort. It's really remarkable what humans can do when we work together.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:09:58

Well, that wraps up our first episode. Thank you so much for listening.

Julie Mclsaac 1:10:03

Join us next time and we'll talk with acoustician Bob Essert and musicologist Hannah Chan-Hartley about how we hear opera. It's a fascinating chat and I learned so much.

Robyn Grant-Moran 1:10:14

So to make sure you don't miss an episode, subscribe to *Key Change*, wherever you get your podcasts.

Julie Mclsaac 1:10:21

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Robyn Grant-Moran 1:10:35

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Julie Mclsaac 1:10:46

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Robyn Grant-Moran 1:10:53

To learn more about today's guests and see the show notes, please visit our website at coc.ca/KeyChange.