

GREATER THAN THE SUM

This spring Curtis Opera Theatre audiences will be the first in Philadelphia to see and hear a remarkable work of twenty-first-century musical theatre. *Ainadamar* (“Fountain of Tears”) by Osvaldo Golijov, a leading composer of our day, is an evocation of the Spanish playwright Federico García Lorca. It is electrifying, dramatic, and beautiful—and it is complicated to produce, with flamenco guitars and laptop-generated sound samples emanating from the orchestra pit, not to mention a substantial dance component onstage. We are honored to offer its Philadelphia premiere and its first production at the conservatory level.

And we could not do it alone.

Under the artistic direction of Mikael Eliassen, the Curtis Opera Theatre has a notable record of producing operas by living composers. In the last five years, Curtis has mounted John Adams’s *Death of Klinghoffer* and Ned Rorem’s *Miss Julie* at the Perelman Theater of the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. In both cases, it was necessary to join forces with local partners to realize our aims. For the Adams work, the Philadelphia Singers provided the chorus, and for *Miss Julie*—the first fully staged opera ever performed in the ideal Perelman Theater—the Kimmel Center was our producing partner, including the performances on its own season. The cooperation of our cultural neighbors made it possible for us to offer our opera and voice students an educational opportunity that will resonate throughout their careers as performers.

This is once again the case with the Curtis Opera Theatre production of *Ainadamar*, which will be presented March 14–16 by the Kimmel Center in association with the Opera Company of Philadelphia. Each organization brings its unique resources to the whole. Curtis provides the production itself, with our students onstage and in the orchestra. The Kimmel Center provides a flexible, appropriate venue. And the Opera Company

is providing its music director, Corrado Rovaris, in addition to marketing support by offering *Ainadamar* to its substantial subscriber base. The result? An event significantly greater than the sum of its parts: Curtis students are receiving a unique educational and performance experience while the Opera Company and the Kimmel Center are able to offer their audiences a stunning contemporary work that neither could produce on its own.

As I write, several weeks before opening night, rehearsals are underway. Our opera and voice students are energized by a unique challenge, and tickets are selling briskly. We will enthusiastically continue this innovative cooperative venture next season with a production of Alban Berg’s seminal but seldom-produced *Wozzeck*—an opera that received its American premiere in Philadelphia under Leopold Stokowski back in 1931, in another collaboration: among Curtis students, the Philadelphia Grand Opera Company, and members of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Clearly such collaborations with our neighbors are not new for Curtis. But they are increasing in frequency and importance as we strive to provide the best educational opportunities for our students in every discipline. Examples abound. Each year the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society presents the Curtis Chamber Orchestra in concert and facilitates master classes at Curtis by its visiting artists. We enjoy a similar relationship with the Philadelphia Orchestra, which has long sent its guest conductors to lead Curtis Symphony Orchestra reading sessions and its guest soloists to lead master classes.

Curtis students perform in the galleries of the Philadelphia Museum of Art several Saturdays during each school year. They play lunchtime recitals in local churches. This season we are strengthening ties with our two closest church neighbors, the Church of the Holy Trinity on Rittenhouse Square and St. Mark’s on Locust Street, with



President Roberto Díaz ~ PHOTO: ALAN KOLC

major performances appropriate to these unique and beautiful spaces, so different from one another and from our own venues within Curtis.

In a new relationship beginning this spring, our students will perform regularly at Longwood Gardens, the unparalleled horticultural estate in Kennett Square, outside Philadelphia. And Curtis’s partnership with public television station WHYY continues: We are recording the third season of weekly recitals to air on WHYY’s Y Arts cable channel, and once again two spring recital performances will be recorded for broadcast on WHYY-Channel 12.

Every one of these relationships brings added educational benefit to our students, whether it’s the opportunity to repeat a thoroughly prepared performance in distinctive venues before varied audiences, to gain insights from a distinguished visiting artist, or to learn from the inside out a cutting-edge work that they could perform at no other conservatory.

In each relationship, the sum of the parts is indeed substantial—but for our students, the whole experience is far greater. ☺

Roberto Díaz