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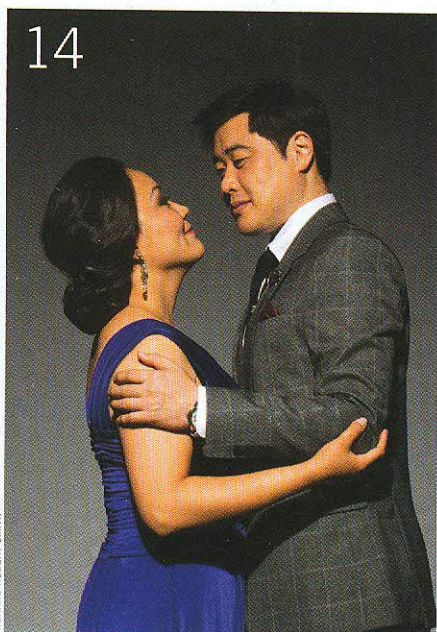
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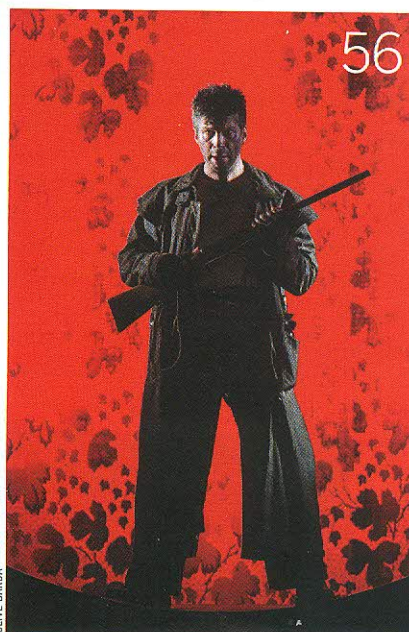
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COVER: Hye-Youn Lee and Ji-Min Park. Photo by Richard Hubert Smith

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Welcome



RENUKIM EADOMEA

Opera Now was launched 25 years ago amid momentous changes around the world. In Europe, 1989 was a year of optimism and new possibilities. It was a time of reunification: the coming together of a world fractured by a generation of bitter conflict. Footage of massed crowds tearing down the Berlin Wall became the iconic image that defined the era: in 1989, the Iron Curtain fell, dictatorships collapsed and a divided Europe became one again.

This upheaval of 25 years ago has had a lasting impact on opera. A wealth of ideas, creativity and talent that was locked behind the Iron Curtain suddenly flowed freely again. At English National Opera, for example, through the late 1980s and early 1990s, the 'Power House' regime of Peter Jonas, David Pountney and Mark Elder re-established

opera's popular and international credentials with an adventurous cutting-edge, distinctly European approach that continues to resonate with audiences. This was the start of an outward-looking process of 'globalisation' that has changed the face of opera: these days, great singers from China and Korea proliferate in European houses; the extraordinary range of musical talent to be found in South Africa and South America is making a major contribution to opera stages around the world; and the arrival of cinema relays has meant that large-scale opera is no longer the preserve of a metropolitan elite.

Another revolutionary innovation dating from 1989, somewhat overlooked at the time, came from a young computer scientist called Tim Berners-Lee. He conceived of a way that computers might communicate with each other in real time, becoming powerful reservoirs of information, to be mined at will. The World Wide Web has changed the way we engage with opera at every level, whether we're booking tickets online, streaming entire performances over the web, or indeed downloading a digital edition of *Opera Now* magazine!

What lies in store for opera over the next quarter of a century? Perhaps 3D films of opera might catch on as the technology that goes into making them becomes cheaper; and holograms of complete performances might follow. Short, pithy new operas made for YouTube might proliferate. Opera made for mobile phones might supersede grand-scale productions in the opera house.

On the other hand, there may be something in the notion that the more 'technologised' we become as a society, the more we crave real experiences. Many of us spend our lives in front of screens, and the idea that opera should merely be a continuum of our everyday existence is surely wrong. Art, music, theatre, song and dance serve to take us out of the ordinary and into the mind-expanding, emotionally stirring sphere of the imagination. That is why opera as a vibrant, living art form experienced in the theatre will continue to matter.

For a taste of things to come, turn to page 29 of this 25th anniversary issue, where some of the most influential figures in the operatic establishment tell us how they would like to shape the future of opera.

Ashutosh Khandekar

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