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# Riccardo Chailly

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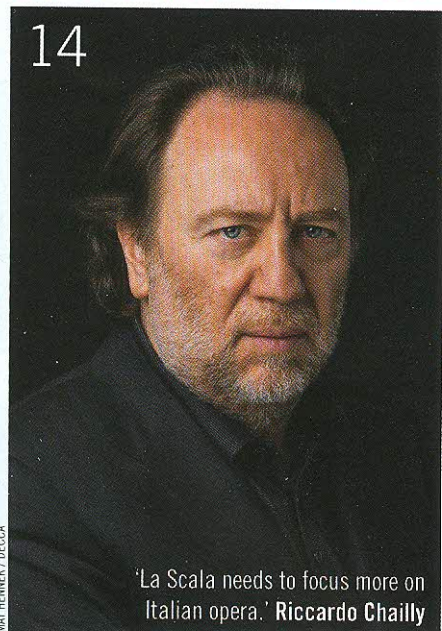
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'La Scala needs to focus more on Italian opera.' Riccardo Chailly

MATT HENNECK / DECCA



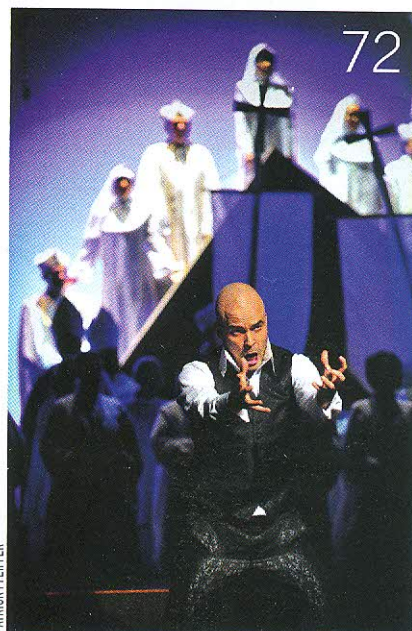
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COVER: Riccardo Chailly. Photo courtesy of Decca



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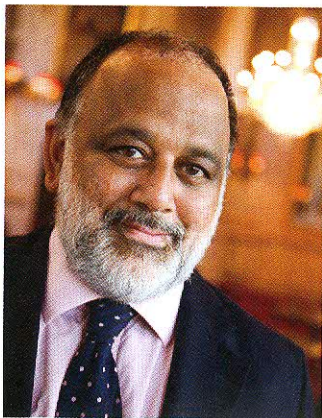
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## Welcome



BENJAMIN ENLORERA

It may be the historic birthplace of opera, but these days, Italy is looking increasingly as if it might turn into an operatic graveyard. The debacle in Rome, where the opera house recently sacked its entire orchestra and chorus after negotiations over pay and conditions went into deadlock, represents the tip of a deep-rooted crisis that has been brewing for decades.

The reasons for the current meltdown in Italy's opera houses are many, from managements that are appointed on account of political favouritism rather than because they can actually do the job, to a culture of complacency whereby people believe that no matter how badly run or profligate opera houses are, they will always be bailed out with public funds because they are too important to be allowed to fail

(there are familiar echoes from the banking sector here).

Opera houses in Italy are just beginning to learn that the State's pockets are not bottomless. The culture minister Dario Franceschini has just delivered a warning in the starkest terms that Italy's 14 entirely publicly funded opera houses are too many for the State to look after. We're talking about a country where opera isn't a mere cultural add-on, but part of the nation's heritage, woven into the fabric of its identity.

Opera is, indeed, important to Italy. In a country on the verge of financial collapse, tourism is one sector that is still growing, accounting for annual revenues of around €140 billion. Of the almost 50 million tourists who visit Italy each year, the vast majority are there to experience its art, history and music. Opera is a significant draw in this cultural mix.

So, Italy can't afford (literally) to lose its opera houses; and it's important to remember that centuries of cultural traditions can be destroyed in an instant, but take generations to rebuild. However, the writing is on the wall unless wholesale change is embraced in Italy's opera scene. The situation in Rome is a warning call. Pay settlements that are realistic, contracts that reward success rather than failure and meritocratic management appointments are all part of the sort of good housekeeping that any business has to accept.

Not all cuts are painful: *Opera Now's* regular readers and subscribers will notice that our next issue, published in January, has a different, slightly smaller format, but with significantly more pages. The reasons are twofold: we wanted to bring our magazine in line with other titles in Rhinegold's extensive stable of performing arts publications. We also felt that a more compact format will make the magazine easier to handle and more convenient to carry around. At the same time, we will be making *Opera Now* look more beautiful than ever, improving the print quality and enhancing the design. All this, just to prove that print, far from being dead, is more drop dead gorgeous than ever.

Ashutosh Khandekar

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