COMMUNITY CONVERSATION
THE WAGNER PROBLEM: PERFORMANCE AND PROGRAMMING IN THE 21ST CENTURY
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2022 AT 10:00 AM

Richard Wagner is once again making an appearance on the Seattle Opera stage, renewing questions about the controversial composer's compatibility with contemporary social values. Wagner's objectionable views and dominant position in the opera canon have long vexed opera lovers, prompting some to wonder what role Wagner should play for modern opera companies.

Join esteemed musicologists and music critics from around the globe as they reflect on the ethics of performing Wagner in the 21st century and envision a more equitable model for classical music. The conversation will address how opera companies might present works by problematic artists, as well as what they can do more broadly to diversify programming. What gets the privilege of being called classical music, and what gets left out of that definition? What role should opera companies play in the cultivation of new music? And how can we find a balance between traditional works and overlooked voices?

Moderator: Joy H. Calico, Ph.D., Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Musicology and Professor of Music Studies, Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University

Panelists:

- Mark Burford, Ph.D., R.P. Wollenberg Professor of Music, Reed College
- Paul Festa, Writer, Filmmaker, and Instructor, Bard College Berlin
- Tamara Levitz, Ph.D., Professor of Musicology and Comparative Literature in the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA

TRANSCRIPT

ALEX MINAMI

Seattle Opera Associate Director of Community Engagement

Our company rests on a long legacy of performing productions by Wagner, and as a company, more and more—and the entire opera industry—is more and more being called to reflect on our relationship with this troubling composer, as well as the place that so many other troubling European traditional works have in our opera canon. To dig into this wonderful and important conversation, we've invited this incredible group of speakers whom you'll get to hear more about in just a minute. And for now, I will introduce our moderator, whom we are very honored to have with us today. Joy H. Calico is the University Distinguished Professor of Musicology and German Studies at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. Her love for opera can be traced to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she grew up attending performances at the Santa Fe Opera and developed a taste for new and unusual repertoire. In that vein she has published in recent years on Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de loin*, Olga Neuwirth's *Lost Highway*, and Chaya Czernowin's *Infinite Now*, and she has taught Western opera of all periods, including the operas of Richard Wagner, for over 20 years. Together with Dr. Naomi André, Seattle Opera's scholar-in-residence, she serves on the working team of the Black Opera Research Network. She is also on the advisory board of the Nashville Opera, where she is a member of the Committee for Artistic and Social Impact. Thank you, Joy, so much. It's an honor to have you lead this conversation.

JOY H. CALICO

Thank you, Alex. Thank you, all of your colleagues at Seattle Opera, Judy Tsou, and also Josh Gailey, for the invitation to be here with you all today.

It would be hard to identify a more influential figure in Western culture than Richard Wagner—"for better or for worse," as Alex Ross says. The eminent music critic Alex Ross recently published his magnum opus entitled *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music*, in which he attempts to trace this wide-ranging influence. The blurb for his book does a really nice job of setting up some of what we'll do today, so I'm going to quote from that here at the top. The PR campaign for his book says, "For better or worse, Wagner is the most widely influential figure in the history of music. Around 1900, the phenomenon known as Wagnerism saturated European and American culture. Such colossal creations as *The Ring of the Nibelung*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Parsifal* were models of formal daring, mythmaking, erotic freedom, and mystical speculation. A mighty procession of artists, including writers like Virginia Woolf and Thomas Mann, the artist Paul Cézanne, dancer and

choreographer Isadora Duncan, and the filmmaker Luis Buñuel, felt his impact. Anarchists, occultists, feminists, and gay rights pioneers all saw him as a kindred spirit. Then Adolf Hitler incorporated Wagner into the soundtrack of Nazi Germany, and the composer came to be defined only by his ferocious antisemitism. For many, his name is now almost synonymous with artistic evil."

Wagner was an antisemite. There is no point in denying that, and it's not as if the Third Reich had to invent a connection to that worldview. He was also not the only antisemite in central Europe and the mid- to late 19th century, but he did leave us an extraordinary amount of evidence. He published a pamphlet entitled *Judaism in Music* under a false name while in exile in 1850, in which he claimed, among other things, that Jewish artists had no culture of their own to contribute and were simply parasites absorbing and warping the culture of whatever place they happened to live. This was a threat to his vision of the emerging German nation. His primary targets were two Jewish composers who were, it should be noted, much more famous and successful than he was at this point. This would be Meyerbeer, working in Paris as an opera composer, and Felix Mendelssohn. And I don't think one has to be a Freudian psychologist to recognize some envy operating in that framework. He then republished the essay in 1869 in an expanded—one might say, "new and improved"—version, and under his own name. He clearly thought there was an audience for these ideas. The issue became much more public in the 1930s, long after his death, when his family, and particularly his daughter-in-law Winifred Wagner, cultivated a close relationship with Hitler himself. At the time she was director of the *Bayreuther Festspiele*, which is the festival dedicated to Wagner's mature operas that takes place each summer in Germany even now. And therefore, his brand, if you will, by which I mean his music, the festival, the theater that is dedicated to his works, and his family all became inextricably bound up with this particularly horrific form of antisemitism.

This brings us to one of the questions that was raised on the website for our talk today. Is it possible to separate the artist from the art, and if it is, how do we as audiences and opera companies do that in the 21st century, assuming we want opera-going to be an experience that is welcoming to all kinds of audience members and all kinds of performers? To that end, I have asked each of our esteemed panelists to prepare a brief opening statement to situate themselves in relation to Wagner, Wagnerism, the questions of separating art from artists, and what that could mean in the 21st century. I'll introduce each of them in turn, they'll make their statements, and then we'll get into some conversation. And as Alex said at the top, please post questions as they arise for you in the Q&A, and we will get to those as we can.

We'll go in alphabetical order, beginning with Mark Burford, who is R. P. Wollenberg Professor of Music at Reed College. His scholarship and teaching focus on twentieth-

century African American music and long-nineteenth-century European concert music. He's published on Sam Cooke, Johannes Brahms, Alvin Ailey, gospel music, and opera. He is the editor of *The Mahalia Jackson Reader* and author of *Mahalia Jackson and the Black Gospel Field,* which received the 2019 American Musicological Society's Otto Kinkeldey Award for the outstanding book in musicology. Just this year, he was awarded the Dent Medal by the Royal Musical Association for outstanding contribution to the field of musicology. His current research project is a book on W.E.B. Du Bois and music, focusing on coverage of music in the NAACP magazine *The Crisis* during Du Bois's 23-year editorship. So please welcome Mark.

MARK BURFORD

Thanks very much, Joy, and I'm really honored to be here at Seattle Opera and among these esteemed colleagues. I think I'd like to approach the Wagner problem, or as Alex suggested, the Wagner trouble, from a slightly askew angle by sharing two experiences from the classroom at my home institution of Reed College that might serve as parables. I'm currently teaching a course, part of which focuses on African American music around the turn of the twentieth century, around 1900, talking about musical theater and one figure that has come up was Bert Williams, singer, songwriter, actor, comedian, and blackface performer. One of my students in the class made the connection, saying that, "Bert Williams reminds me a lot of Tyler Perry, in terms of the distaste." For those who don't know Tyler Perry, he has a franchise of movies where he plays this *travesti* role and dresses as a woman, and which some people feel traffics in somewhat dated Black stereotypes. What I mentioned to the student was that if you, for instance, were troubled by Tyler Perry, you could reach for your dial and go, click Barack Obama, click Kara Walker, Condoleezza Rice, Michael Jordan, Serena Williams, Jesse Montgomery, Denzel Washington, Angela Davis, Henry Louis Gates, Beyoncé, and click, click, click, click, click. If you're troubled by Bert Williams in 1901, or when he was active and then you clicked your dial, you'd find other minstrel stereotypes and uneducable people, biologically fixed inferiority, derogatory visual imagery, the "Negro Problem," lynched Black bodies, Old South nostalgia, Jim Crow segregation, click, click, click. So that was the cable package that Bert Williams was a part of. The aptness of the comparison in some ways is undercut by the context of the ecosystem that Bert Williams was a part of, or Tyler Perry.

The other example from the classroom comes from my music history course. Every music department at most colleges has some music history sequence, and several years ago I restructured mine so it was less about Europe than it really was focusing on the Mediterranean as a contact zone, where you have this thing called Christian Europe and this thing called the Islamic world coming in contact and thinking about how Europe in some

ways is constituted by that contact. But beyond the global historical methodology, it was really remarkable to see the gears of the minds of the students used to looking at maps of Europe, working a bit hard or even grinding as they grappled with the disorienting implication of a circum-Mediterranean framing of classical music, suggested by a shifted cartographic line of vision that brought Rome and Jerusalem, Paris and Istanbul, Athens and Aleppo, Barcelona and Benghazi into greater proximity. In other words, the object that was once centered becomes just constitutive, and Europe, to borrow from Dipesh Chakrabarty, becomes provincialized, changed not by changing, but simply by newly situated relationships to other things.

I wonder if the so-called "Wagner Problem" might be thought of in this way. One way of tackling the place of Wagner's operas in the repertory is through new direction, new casting, and new audiences, and I'm sure we're going to talk about that today. But another, akin to the Europe problem or the Tyler Perry problem, may be to find a way to make Wagner a part of a larger operatic ecosystem that includes new works that address the themes, desires, and ethos of our day, just as Wagner's operas did for his. Now having said that, I realized that economic obstacles that make this an uphill battle, and it's not my money to spend. In some ways, that's a question for the opera producers, because the war horses do pay the bills. But finding creative and sustainable ways to provincialize Wagner may not solve the problem but may perhaps mitigate some of the trouble. I think about operas like William Grant Still's *Highway 1*, Jimmy Lopez's *Bel Canto*, Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue*, Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*, which is premiering with the LA Opera in a few weeks. Gabriela Lena Frank's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*. These operas are sprouting. Thinking about how we situate those in the repertory might be part of addressing the Wagner Problem, which may be less a matter of the relationship between the composer and the artwork than our own perhaps failure of imagination of what operatic experience can be. Thank you.

CALICO

Thank you, Mark. That gets us off to a really provocative start. I love the way you frame this about an ecosystem of opera and where the focal point of the map is, the cartography. All right, let's go on to Paul Festa, who is an artist working at the intersection of film, fiction, music, and criticism. His films include the experimental documentaries *Apparition of the Eternal Church*, about the music of Messiaen, and *Tie It Into My Hand*, a series of violin lessons given to the filmmaker by noted non-violinists, including Harold Bloom, Margaret Cho, and Robert Pinsky. As a violinist, he has performed at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress. His essays have

appeared in publications including *The New York Times Book Review* and *The Los Angeles Review of Books,* where his Wagner essay "Cancellation of the Gods" was published last year. A resident of Berlin, Germany, Paul has taught courses at Bard College Berlin in literature, philosophy, film production, fiction writing, modern Italian history, and music history. Paul, bring us into your perspective on this topic.

PAUL FESTA

Thank you. I guess the entry point to my perspective on this topic would be the moment when I was a 15-year-old violin student in San Francisco, and I was in the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, and our section leader, the principal second violinist of the orchestra, said to us that we must not miss the performance that was happening that weekend of Wolfgang Sawallisch giving the first San Francisco Symphony performances of the *Metamorphosen* of Richard Strauss. I missed it, but I caught it off the radio and recorded it, and I listened to it until my ears bled. I could not stop listening to this piece of music. It absolutely transformed my consciousness in the most seductive way, and I was a depressed teenager, and this was the soundtrack that I had been looking for my whole life. It was just an absolutely marvelous experience.

With this amount of enthusiasm and more, I brought it to my violin teacher, and he said, "Do you know what Strauss was? Do you know that he was a Nazi? Do you know what he did to our people?" I got a Holocaust lecture that would make your hair stand on end, even if you didn't have any, and all about Wagner and all about Strauss, and it was just dreadful and humiliating. I went away from that lesson resolving never to mention or darken his door with those composers again. And yet I had another mentor, a very influential mentor, who was a news reporter, and his idol was Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. I would go to his house, and we would listen to Elisabeth Schwarzkopf singing the music of Richard Strauss and Franz Schubert and Wolfgang Mozart and all the rest of it. But now that I had been enlightened, I had been awakened to the horror of this man and his associates, and I was going to pay that forward. I said to George, "Do you know that Elisabeth Schwarzkopf slept with a Nazi general?" And he said, "I didn't know that. But for her performance in the last act trio of *Der Rosenkavalier* I would forgive her that. I would forgive her anything."

To be 15 years old and have a very sure moral compass and view of the world, to have my circuits fried like this, I was bouncing back and forth between these two positions. You cancel, you don't cancel; you celebrate these men, you celebrate the music and you repudiate the men, or the whole thing has to go out the window. I split the difference. I took Strauss, and I said I'm going to sacrifice Wagner, whom I didn't know very well, and that's how I'll be a good Jew and a good aesthete, I suppose, or a good art lover.

Fast-forward 35 years, and I had to teach a music history course at Bard, and it was a history of Western music as told through the lens of difficulty, and it was called "Music for Masochists: Five Centuries of Difficult Listening to Western Classical Music." Wagner plays not a very small role in that story, especially the opera that we're all here to discuss, and *Tristan* is central to the history of difficulty in Western music. I had some catching up to do, so I posted this to Facebook: I said, "I'm sort of new to Wagner. What *Tristan* should I listen to?" And I was publicly chastised by one of my friends, who referred me to the Sarah Silverman video on Jewish people driving German cars. It was almost like I'd gotten the worst of both worlds. I hadn't gotten the Wagner, but I was suddenly getting the public calumny for even expressing interest in Wagner.

The next thing to happen in this story was that I was asked to write about Alex Ross's book for the *Los Angeles Review,* and it was in the middle of pandemic lockdown, so I took it as an opportunity to finally get caught up on all these operas. I watched them all in succession, except I kept *The Ring* together, so starting with *Rienzi* and all the way up through *Parsifal*. And in the resulting essay, I came to the conclusion that avoiding Wagner, canceling Wagner, all those years had simply been an exercise in self-harm, and that I hadn't done anybody any good by doing that. Another takeaway, in terms of reading the extraordinary collection of histories that Alex Ross has put together in *Wagnerism*, is that I have not been alone with this struggle. There's a support group that transcends time and space for those of us who love this music and loathe the man who made it. It includes Theodore Herzl, who said that he couldn't get any work done on writing *The Jewish State* except when they were playing *Tannhäuser* at the opera. And it includes W.E.B. Du Bois, who said marvelous things about the importance of this music to all of us. It includes Thomas Mann, it includes members of the Wagner family, whose lives and livelihoods depended on getting on top of this problem during the denazification of the country, and the denazification of Bayreuth. I feel very much less alone with this problem now that I've wrestled with it in this essay and in other ways.

But it's funny. The way that this panel is advertised is that we're talking about questions about the controversial composer's compatibility with contemporary social values. Of course, that's exactly what we're doing, but it almost suggests—and you can correct me if I'm wrong—that we have evolved in our understanding, that we're enlightened now, and before they didn't really know. Wagner was in violation of his contemporary social values. His antisemitism was an embarrassment to his friends, to his family, to his coworkers, to the Jews that he worked with. It was just awful. Everyone was looking away from the spectacle of his bigotry. Liszt particularly just wished that he could put it aside. He said, "I can't. It's integral to who I am." The antisemitism was like a disease that he was not interested in curing himself from. I think I've exceeded my five minutes. I have a few other things. Should

I just save them and hope that they could work their way in, or should I keep talking? Joy, I'm going to let you moderate me.

CALICO

I will moderate you, as you said. I am struck though by the fact that both you and Mark had a pedagogical example to lead with, of very different types of pedagogy about the way of engaging with students who have questions and want to think about these topics. Thank you for that, Paul.

Tamara Levitz is a Professor of Comparative Literature and Musicology in the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA. For the past decade she has researched structures of white supremacy and racial exclusion in the formation of the music disciplines in the United States. She's currently working on a project on settler colonial humanists and the racial foundations of comparison, in which she engages with the work of George Herzog, Zora Neale Hurston, Helen Heffron Roberts, and Louise Rosenblatt, with the goal of comparing how comparative musicology, musicology and comparative literature, became racialized as disciplines within the U.S. settler colonial state in the twentieth century. Tamara, let's hear from you.

TAMARA LEVITZ

Thank you so much. I'm very honored also to be on this panel, and those were wonderful contributions. I'm very excited for our conversation afterwards. I've written something, so I'll just read it.

My love affair with Wagner began when I was a teenager and my mother agreed to buy us a record player to allow us to listen to long-play records. I'm not quite sure of the circumstances, but somehow the box set of the Paris version of *Tannhäuser* in the October 1970 recording conducted by Georg Solti and the Vienna Philharmonic came into my possession. Having decided to study music history, I took the task of listening to Wagner very seriously. I would solemnly open the treasured box set every morning before school and listen to at least one side of the performance.

My love grew to such a degree that when I was ready to go to grad school, I got the idea of studying Wagner in Germany, even though I was Jewish. With tremendous naïveté and hope, I wrote Carl Dahlhaus, in my mind at that time the greatest living musicologist in the world. "I love Wagner," I wrote him, and "can I study with you?" Literally translated from a dictionary, because I did not speak German yet. Miraculously he responded and supported my request, and in 1984, at the age of 22, I headed to West Berlin to study Wagner.

I don't know exactly when my love of Wagner began to wane after my arrival in Germany. It may have been when I went to my first performance of *Die Walküre* at the Deutsche Oper, and the audience started literally throwing vegetables at the stage and booing because, as I was told, the conductor, Jesús López Cobos, was Spanish, and Wotan was played by Simon Estes, an African American. Or perhaps my love began to wane when I joined the local Berlin Wagner Society but had to stop going, because the older members kept making antisemitic remarks. Or maybe it was all over for me when I wrote the *Bayreuther Festspiele* full of enthusiasm, volunteering to be an unpaid usher, but they responded that they wanted no foreigners, that no foreigners were allowed.

Whatever it was, at some point I had to admit to myself that my love for Wagner was unrequited. By the end of my first year in grad school there, quite unconscious of what I was doing, I switched to studying the Jewish composer Arnold Schoenberg. Although I have taught Wagner subsequently in my entire life, I never recovered the love for him I once had.

If I tell you this story, it's because I think this personal history shapes how I feel about Wagner today at the age of 60. At a moment when Kanye West is spewing antisemitic hate across the Internet and hate crimes against Jews in the United States are rising, I feel intolerant of Wagner's antisemitism. This has led me to conclude that the only way to perform and produce Wagner's opera or any opera is in an opera house that supports anti-racist policy, "fighting at all times against individual, interpersonal, institutional and structural racism," to use Ibram Kendi's and the National Museum of African American History and Culture's definitions. What this means is not that we worry about what Wagner said or personally thought, or about representation in art, but rather about creating an inclusive aesthetic space. Here I'm following Paul C. Taylor, who in his impressive book, *Black is Beautiful*, rejects static norms in an essentialized view of race, and instead describes Black aesthetics expansively as the "ongoing trans-generational, theoretical, and critical discursive practice and tradition of arguing about, theorizing about, and otherwise engaging with the themes or questions that routinely arise in relation to the aesthetic dimension of being racialized as Black." If we follow Paul Taylor, we can reconstruct (his word) the aesthetic space of the opera house to be more inclusive by inviting Black aesthetics and all non-white and non-heteronormative aesthetics into the once white heteronormative aesthetic space. This means inviting non-white and gender diverse people themselves, establishing a very strong policy for the consistent hiring of non-white and gender-diverse singers, conductors, orchestra players, and all levels of wage-earners in the opera house. It means inviting the communities as well, with outreach, incentives, and engagement, and commissioning works that do not solely perpetuate a white heteronormative aesthetic. It means inviting directors who will offer anti-racist stagings. In other words, to create an inclusive space does not mean we stop performing Wagner or

worry about what we add or subtract from the repertoire of the opera house in terms of representation. Rather, it means all operas are performed from an anti-racist perspective.

At UCLA, I teach a course in which we attend one or two operas at LA Opera but spend the entire quarter studying them. Anti-racist pedagogy means to me opening up the opera's relationship to the world and teaching it comparatively, with an eye to making conscious the ways in which it constructs difference, racializes and genders aesthetics, and excludes. And here I see a link with what Professor Burford was saying about shifting the cartographic vision and provincializing Wagner.

If I were teaching *Tristan und Isolde*, I would be interested to talk about medieval romance upon in which it was based and the way that romance traveled around the world at that time in its many versions. Or perhaps we could spend time talking about the late premiere of *Tristan und Isolde* in Caracas, Venezuela in 1948, and Alejo Carpentier's response to that event in *Tristán e Isolda en tierra firme*. We might even talk about W.E.B. Du Bois' love of Wagner, and the role of Wagnerian opera in segregated Black schools in the South. In other words, we would confront the socially constructed whiteness of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* with the non-white worlds in which it's circulated. In its programming initiatives and structure, I get the sense that Seattle Opera is primed to become such an anti-racist opera house, setting a model for other opera houses around the world. I look forward then to talking with all of you about this topic this morning.

CALICO

Thank you, Tamara. Thank you for those provocations. That's a very productive place to start. There's something that Mark, you alluded to in your remarks but didn't say explicitly, something we had talked about when we met earlier, about not thinking of this in terms of loss, but about thinking of a larger ecosystem of opera; that Wagner has a place in it, but not necessarily—he doesn't have to have the place in it, or that there are other works, like Tamara was talking about, other ways of engaging with Wagner, or other operas that can be brought into that discourse. I guess that's one of the questions, Tamara was just saying, that there still is a place for Wagner in an anti-racist opera company, but there is an interrogation or an intervention that happens in staging Wagner. I know that as Alex said at the top, Seattle Opera has a long investment in staging Wagner, but they also have projects like the Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab, which is fostering new music, new composers, new operas. I'd be interested in hearing everybody think through the idea about how this works, not necessarily hitting on the perfect percentage of balance, but ways we can bring this really central canonical voice into being part of the ecosystem and not dominating it, I guess. Paul, does that hit on anything you were thinking about previously and didn't get to say?

FESTA

Well, a little bit. I'll give you as an example. There was a big exhibition that was just done at the German Historical Museum in Berlin, *Richard Wagner and the German Feeling*. I heard the curator on radio, and I'm totally interested in Wagner, and I'm interested in the German feeling—amazing, this is something I want to see. The guy was interviewed on the radio, and he spent three-quarters of the time talking about Wagner's antisemitism. And I thought, "Do I really want to go to this?" That's a subject that I've just spent a great deal of time thinking about and reading about, and it turns my stomach, and I want some separation from that now. I don't want to dive back in. And then I asked someone a few months later who mentioned that they had been. I said, "How was the Wagner exhibition?" He said, "It was wonderful. They did a really great job of talking about his antisemitism." And I was like, "Okay, I'm going to skip it." And then this invitation came, and I thought, "I have to go see this thing. It's up for another week. I can't report to this conversation and not have seen it." So I went, and it was quite amazing to me. It touched so briefly on the matter of his antisemitism, but it was what everybody came away with.

Identity politics and social justice are so very much at the forefront of what we are all thinking about now, and rightly so. But when it comes to the work of an artist like Richard Wagner, it takes over completely in people's imaginations and their conversations about it. I suppose in a very important way that's important for society, right? Absolutely, it's important for people to know their history so that we don't repeat it. It's important for artists to know that this man is in need of perpetual rescue from the depths of the reputation that he made for himself, so that they don't be antisemites and racists and find themselves being canceled, right? Maybe Kanye West could have heard all of this and said, "Maybe I shouldn't be making anti—." Maybe it has a kind of deterrent effect.

But for me, antisemitism killed a lot of my family, and homophobia—I've been subject to public insults in the street. I don't need to go to an exhibition to learn more about that. I do want to learn more about that, but probably when I read *The New York Review of Books* or the autobiography of Angela Davis. But I go to the museum and the opera primarily to experience aesthetic bliss. And there was one little thing I did want to read, and I'm glad you gave me the opportunity. It's in the introduction to a beautiful book by Francine Prose called *Reading Like a Writer*. She says, "I enjoyed the opportunity to function as a sort of cheerleader [in her teaching] for literature. I liked my students, who were often so eager, bright, and enthusiastic that it took me years to notice how much trouble they had in reading a fairly simple short story. Almost simultaneously, I was struck by how little attention they had been taught to pay to the language, to the actual words and sentences that a writer had used. Instead, they had been encouraged to form strong, critical, and often negative opinions of geniuses who had been read with delight for centuries before they

were born. They had been instructed to prosecute or defend these authors as if in a court of law, on charges having to do with the writer's origins, their racial, cultural, and class backgrounds. They had been encouraged to rewrite the classics into more acceptable forms that the authors might have discovered had they only shared their young critics' level of insight, tolerance, and awareness. No wonder my students found it so stressful to read. And possibly because of the harsh judgments they felt required to make about fictional characters and their creators, they didn't seem to like reading, which also made me worry for them, and wonder why they wanted to become writers." This is the hazard. I'm thrilled to participate in this conversation, I think this conversation is very necessary, but there's a question of balance. And I worry that a lot of the academy has become so obsessed with this one area, right? That when art is encountered, the focus on aesthetic bliss has been either marginalized or lost altogether, and that frightens me.

CALICO

Thanks, Paul. It looks like Tamara's got a response ready. Go ahead.

LEVITZ

I just wanted to say, I think, though, all aesthetic experience, as Paul Taylor was saying, as I said, is racialized. The kind of aesthetic bliss being described might be a certain kind that not everyone shares. And one thing I think of is that if people were invited into the opera house, a young generation who is thinking differently, who will have new approaches to Wagner. Recently I was talking with one of my graduate students about, she had taught in Japan, and how she had been taught to teach in Japan was quite different than how we teach, let's say, or how *I* teach—excuse me, I shouldn't say "we"—in the United States. We have such cultural differences, but also again, we have such different ideas of what aesthetic experience is. When Paul Taylor writes that the aesthetic is racialized, not everyone shares the same idea of what an aesthetic experience would be. Somehow the opera house has to be filled with the people who are coming from different perspectives, who can look differently at Wagner.

What you said about Wagner's antisemitism, I tend to think we have to always talk about it. It was miserable and horrible, but I do agree. Wagner can disappear a little bit. How important is he in our world today, like right now? There are so many interesting things everybody is talking about, and so much music and interest. The last thing I wanted to say, that exhibition at the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin actually set up Wagner against Marx, and I didn't think it did a very good job, but I think it was trying to say there was the Marxist vision of how to go forward, and the Wagnerian vision, that's an aside. I

think the more important thing I wanted to say to you is that aesthetic experience is racialized. Not everyone shares the experience of bliss. Bring in a young person and put them in front of *Tristan*. See what they say. Just change the makeup of the opera house so that we get these different perspectives.

CALICO

In all aspects of the opera house, audience, performance, production. Because I take your point that there is no ideal listener or audience member. This is something Naomi André talks about, that people have very different experiences when they come into the opera house based on their pre-history and their experiences. Mark, it looks like you've got something on your mind.

BURFORD

I'm interested in how Paul reframes the question in the sense of how much the Wagner Problem is really about us in the end, though I have perhaps a different perspective. Part of what makes the Wagner Problem is that we have a very particular investment in Wagner that is qualitatively different than any other opera composer. There's no Mozartism, there's no Handelism, there's no Verdi-ism, but there is a Wagnerism. Just even thinking about how that moment of bliss becomes the foundation for something that feels like a movement—that doesn't seem like an incidental move that happens. There's a culture, there's a way of receiving, there's a way of understanding the kind of responses to casting choices in a Wagner opera, that Tamara mentioned, seems particular to Wagner. Maybe they're not, but I think it's worth interrogating that aspect of it. Why is the love of a composer compounded by so many things, whether it's contemporary identity politics or turn-of-the-century ideas about national identity and metaphysics. I think that there's something that may lie in that "-ism" of Wagnerism that we maybe can focus on, because that implicates us a little bit more than thinking specifically about the relationship of Wagner's politics to a work of art.

CALICO

My particular problem with Wagner, well before I knew anything about his antisemitic history, was that I was resistant to the overwhelm of Wagner. It annoyed me to be so immersed and to feel so out of control in an encounter with Wagnerian music. I think Nietzsche eventually comes in—there are a lot of recovering Wagnerians too, and Nietzsche is probably the president of that club. There's something going on with a different aesthetic experience that feels—and also having been to the *Festspielhaus*—there's something

deliberately uncomfortable and almost painful about that experience. It's too long, the chairs are uncomfortable, the music is overwhelming.

LEVITZ

No, that's wonderful what you're saying. I really like what Mark said about Wagnerism, because it's true. It's so interesting to think about why, since the nineteenth century, there has been this phenomenon of, like you said, dominating in every way, or creating this certain aesthetic experience that so many people seek, including myself. I very much liked that aspect of it. And I wanted to say, I feel like actually in the world right now, we have a Kanye West Problem. In the opera house, we have a Wagner Problem, like the degree to which this problem affects people is very limited. It is class-based, and it's based on a certain group. It's interesting. I say that because years ago, in the 1980s in Berlin, he was a real problem widely, it seemed, in society, and now it's an opera house problem. I know I've brought up Kanye before, but it's interesting to compare the type of thing happening in that problem to the Wagner Problem.

CALICO

One of the questions we had talked about previously was, let's say we decenter Wagner, or we do less Wagner, or is there something lost in those decisions? And I really liked the point that Mark made in that discussion, which was that it doesn't have to be about loss. It can be about what is gained. What happens if we expand the definition or the scope or the people who get to come to the opera, to have their stories told at the opera? Does that necessarily have to be loss? Mark, do you want to speak to that?

BURFORD

I guess I would say that, as I said before, I think that imagining the range of experiences one can have at the opera, and one can be that overwhelm, that experience that Paul described so beautifully of this encounter with a work of art that seeps into every pore. And as we know from the history of opera, that's just one of many different ways in which people experienced opera and used opera.

I actually want to read something as well, if I can find it here, in *The Crisis*. Both Paul and Tamara mentioned Du Bois's love of opera, and I think that would be an interesting topic to think about, the history of African American reception of Wagner. I found in my study of *The Crisis*, this account of a critic who goes to a Black club. This white critic goes to a Black club in New Jersey and describes the scene. I just want to read it. He says, "A single spluttering gas flame spit a spiral wave of city smoke toward the low ceiling and shot a yellow circular

wave into the darkness, thrusting deep shadows into the corners. Up against the bar and alongside the walls, a dozen Negros or more lounged with that easy animal grace so naturally inherent to them. They all maintain a strange quietude, with only an occasional sibilant whisper tearing through the silence like a streak of lightning across black skies. All eyes were centered attentively on a young buck and a wench in close embrace, going through the rhythmic dance interpretation of the hiccupping music that stuttered from a chronically asthmatic player piano. But what was this music on the cylindrical roll, with its queer hieroglyphic excisions? Was it a popular dance tune, a ragtime melody, a jazz strain, or a tuneful hymn? Oh no, it was nothing less than the Prelude and *Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. And it was to this intense surging and tumultuous cry of love passion that the two young Negroes pirouetted with an inconceivably imaginative conception of appropriate movement of the limbs. Considering the rhythm was character of the music from our terpsichorean point of view, the performance was amazing for its audaciousness and precocity, and equally astounding was the cool, nonchalant attitude of the onlookers who critically studied each movement of the dancers, and quietly commented upon them among themselves."

This scene, obviously, the racist language aside, this couple in this club in New Jersey that's making use of Wagner's music—in a way, that is also about experience, but about what can be made of that, how personally we can use these experiences. So thinking about other ways—if bliss is one thing, then perhaps seeing oneself on stage, seeing particular stories told, or other kinds of pleasures that opera can provide.

CALICO

Opera-going as cultural practice can mean many different types of experiences, I think, or even engagement with opera, not at the house. Tamara?

LEVITZ

I just wanted to say to loss. I was listening to Kira Turman and Naomi speaking about opera at Seattle Opera last week, and they were talking about how excited they always are to discover new Black composers, new Black performers. And Naomi was saying they're all over the place. I think it's really exciting to provincialize Europe and realize, oh my gosh, look what was going on—look what's going on in the world if we just provincialize Wagner, provincialize Europe. And it's very exciting. It's not a loss, it's a gain to not have everything focused on this certain culture.

CALICO

What do you think, Paul? What do you think about the loss versus gain?

FESTA

I'm in accordance. Repertory is additive. You add more things to the repertory, some things go into storage. That's inevitable. It's like a museum collection. You can't have it all out at once, unless you're the Barnes collection, and then you're getting neck strain because things are piled up at the ceiling. I don't think that's the best kind of curation. I have particular nominations of things I think should go into storage. Like, I don't understand why people want to watch *Meistersinger* again. My God, I'd rather—. But this is purely subjective. There are a ton of things in the repertory that I think are more expendable than Richard Wagner's operas. Sorry, Puccini, it doesn't rise to the level. There's just so many things that we listen to over and over and over again, and they bring in the audiences and people love it. And I'm very, very bored. I'm new to Wagner, right? Because I canceled him for most of my life. If we really marginalize things, we're only going to do one Wagner opera every two seasons, I'll be very sad about that. I'll be sorry. I think that's disproportionate. I think that it's wonderful to provincialize Europe, but that doesn't mean throwing out our basic aesthetic judgment that Wagner did something really special among the group of composers with whom he is always—not always, but so routinely—grouped. He's really special. So that's my point of view.

CALICO

And to add to that, I would think about, historically opera has been about new opera, about new repertoire every season coming in all the time. And one of the side effects of the formation of the canon, particularly the operatic canon, because it's so expensive and there's so few things you can stage per season, as opposed to a symphony, which cycles through a lot of rep, is that there's a tendency to play it safe and to come back to things that make money, that are sure-fire audience-pleasers. But I think it's worth remembering that that is not the way opera always functioned, that that institution has historically been much more adventuresome. And that has partly to do with different funding models, all of those things. But if we're thinking about, let's say the ideal landscape for opera in the United States, quite apart from funding, because I can't do anything about that at the moment, but thinking about where is the space, if we could think about it as something that has space for Wagner, but also lots and lots of new opera and new voices. Something I know that Kira has talked about before, is that there are plenty of operas lying in archives that were never published or haven't been staged for all sorts of obstacles, systemic

reasons that Tamara has written about, that Mark has mentioned. Those things are new to us. They're not new in history but would be new to audiences. So I think that's another part of thinking about opera as an institution, that it historically was about a lot more new stuff than known. Tamara.

LEVITZ

I was just going to say something, Paul, to Wagner being special, because I think part of the way certain repertoire has been held up is thinking it is somehow better in some way, deeper or more complicated, or Wagner's musical language is, so we must retain Wagner, because he's just so interesting. But I actually don't believe that. I actually believe that all kinds of art has all kinds of ways of being interesting and special, and Puccini too. I'm a Puccini fan. I just, when you said that I thought, oh no, but that's the way that people have held this up, by claiming some kind of specialness to it. And maybe if we just say Wagner's not all that special—that's what I sort of think—but we can put him on, people like him, and let's put him on, and let's perform him. But he's no more special than anything else we're doing.

CALICO

I see that we have a couple of questions in the Q&A. A couple of these we have addressed already. Spencer Edgers asking what happens when we shift our view and give contemporary artists the opportunity to take up more space than problematic long-deceased artists? I think this is partly what we were just talking about, and certainly this is something that Naomi André's work has focused on very consciously, about giving space for voices both on the stage and in the audience that have not been heard. There's also—he had a previous question: "Assuming that we wouldn't knowingly program a contemporary composer who shares Wagner's prejudice, why do we continue to provide a platform for an artist who was openly and blatantly racist and antisemitic, whose music inspired Hitler? Are we so unimaginative? Why hang a pride flag on a statue of Robert E. Lee?" Okay, yeah, Tamara.

LEVITZ

Sorry to talk, but not all of Wagner's works are antisemitic. We didn't talk about how the composer and the work are separate. *Tristan und Isolde* is not antisemitic. There are specific works that have representations, like *Die Meistersinger*, that are antisemitic. We're not publishing *The Jews in Music* in the program of Seattle Opera, thank God. We are actually showing works. So they're not all antisemitic. I think we have to be careful of, "He's just

antisemitic. Let's throw the whole thing in the garbage." We have to be really careful. And there are a few works that are antisemitic.

FESTA

And then I would also, if I could add to that, I made the first-person subjective claim earlier, I'm a Jew, I'm gay, I'm a feminist, I'm an antiracist. If I ban in my own listening, in my own watching, and in my own art-loving everyone who ever said something nasty about the gays or the Jews or the women, I'm going to run out of things to listen to, because there's a whole lot of homophobia in the history of the world. And that's an exercise, from my perspective, as I said before, in self harm. I'm not going to impoverish myself that way. And Du Bois had the most beautiful quote when he came back from by Bayreuth in 1936, swastikas flying from every flagpole, from every shop window. He knew exactly where he was. He subsequently wrote that, "German antisemitism surpassed in vindictive cruelty and public insult anything that I have ever seen, and I have seen much." But he didn't let that prevent him from going to the operas, or loving them or enjoying them, or experiencing aesthetic bliss. He said, "No human being, white or Black, can afford not to know them, if he would know life."

CALICO

We have another question, Brenda asking. She said, "Mozart's operas are misogynist. Do we throw out Mozart?" And I think this gets back to what Tamara said about not all of Wagner's operas are antisemitic. Some of them have an explicit— It's not hard to see what that is. *Tristan und Isolde* is not one of them. Making the distinction between, as Paul was saying, canceling the entire oeuvre of a composer, and making choices about which rep to perform from that artist, I think. Jane Repensek says, "I'm struck by the fact that I don't know the philosophies or ideologies of almost every painter and architect, but I've enjoyed their works immensely. Are the performing arts different, and if so, is that fair?" What do you think? Is there something different about the performing arts as opposed to architecture, for example?

BURFORD

I would just say very briefly that I think that part of this is the ideology of the composer that emerges in the nineteenth century, that somehow music becomes this expressive art, and that the identity between the artwork and the composer, and we know it's an ideology, and it's hardly a consistent relationship if it is one at all, but the very belief that what a composer is doing is expressing themself through music I think invites people to see the

work of art as somehow a function or contingent upon their personality, their personal beliefs and such, in a way that perhaps an architect or maybe a visual artist— I don't know, I'm not an art historian and I don't know that discourse as well. But I do think there is a history of thinking about some sort of an identity relationship between the composer and a work of art that I think is a fiction. And that's another thing to think about when we think about the Wagner Problem. But I think that's perhaps why music invites that particular interpretation.

FESTA

As far as architecture is concerned, this is a real problem in my life, because I walk around Berlin, and it's a minefield. I admire a building and say, "Uh-oh, the Nazis put that out, didn't they? Oh, now I hate it." It's just part of the world that I live in on a daily basis, and I'm always checking my aesthetic responses against my historical knowledge, and sometimes I embarrass myself. This whole Wagner Problem is embarrassing. It's embarrassing we have to reconcile our love of art with our desire for justice, and our wish to publicly shame those who, through the ages, have said things that were toxic and malignant and bigoted.

CALICO

I hear you when you say you're tired of thinking about it, and I've heard it. But it is surprising to me, perhaps because I have also thought about it a lot, that there are people who don't know, who are not aware of this history. And I think my experience with audiences at Nashville Opera in particular is that they want to know, they want to make a conscious decision. "Who is this composer, who is this artist? I want to know." They don't want to be, as you're saying, to feel embarrassed that they're not aware of the whole story. So I think that even if the story is old for some people, that there is always someone who doesn't know.

FESTA

Tamara, can I just quickly finish my thought, which was that the funny thing about Wagner is that he was perfectly capable of putting a Jewish character, a Jewish villain into one of his operas. He didn't do that. There's a lot of saying, "Well, Alberich represents the Jews, or Mime, he's got Jewish characteristics. They're money-grubbing"—all these stereotypical things. But in a certain sense, he protected the work from his own diseased political imagination to some degree, right? Maybe he didn't do it a hundred percent, but there's no Shylock, right? Where's the Shylock in the Wagner oeuvre? And we're not going to cancel

Shakespeare. Shylock is a, talk about an embarrassment, ay yai yai. *Merchant of Venice* is a really tough one for those of us who are Jewish.

LEVITZ

It's so interesting what everyone's saying. I was just going to say, I think to the question that was asked, I think also to everything that's been said, that opera has long been a place of representation on the stage, like in its origins and a lot through its history, it represented the monarchs, and I think today it's playing a very important role in representation. I think that's why these debates in the opera house are so important, and all these new works coming out are so important. There's something about opera's history representing on the stage that also makes it particularly important somehow that we know about Wagner. I also wanted to say I absolutely don't believe in cancel culture. When I'm talking about diminishing Wagner, it's more just there's so much opera out there, and he's had a lot of time and space, and we can put him in storage for a little bit. But I don't believe in cancel culture, so I do believe we just keep talking and learning from this past. If we cancel it, we can't learn from it. We can't have an antiracist approach. We can't understand what it did in history. We can't understand how white aesthetics came about in all of this. So I don't think we can cancel anything.

FESTA

By the same token, I'd like to clarify that I'm not saying that we shouldn't be having these conversations. But I really believe that the balance has to be struck properly, and that we have be celebrating the magic of this work and of what this man made perhaps more than we denigrate his lamentable views on Jews.

LEVITZ

But maybe being an antiracist is a form of celebration, to be an antiracist is a celebration.

CALICO

Oh, can you say a little more about that, Tamara?

LEVITZ

Because I think it's much more positive. I actually am not capable of going, "Oh, I loved Wagner." I have to look at it from that, because I think it is very positive to bring equality and social justice. If we have an antiracist approach, and we think about that, and an antiracist

aesthetic where people are included, where different communities feel included in this opera house that has such an important place in the city, that to me is very joyous. And I guess in an aesthetic experience, I think reading Paul Taylor or learning different kinds of music and art, when one understands these different aesthetic worlds, and that is also joyous, I would say.

FESTA

For me, one of the most joyous experiences of my journey with Wagner is I actually did catch *Die Walküre* when I was a music student in New York, and there was Jessye Norman singing Sieglinde and James Levine in the pit. So this music was brought to me by one of the great singers, period, who was a Black woman, and by one of the great conductors, who was a Jew.

CALICO

Who also has his own baggage at this point, right?

FESTA

Oh, yes, he does.

CALICO

Let's stick with this particular topic, then. Tamara, I was going to ask, do you mind putting in the chat for the attendees, the title of Paul Taylor's book? It's come up a couple of times, and since he's not a music scholar, I'm not sure people would recognize him. We have some other chats that have come up here. Similar questions about what I would translate as cancel culture. Keith Clark saying, "Henry Ford was far more anti-Jewish than Wagner. Should I sell my Mustang?" This is I think what we're talking about in terms of making informed choices for individuals. Was it Paul, were you going to say something to that, about Henry Ford being far more anti-Jewish than Wagner, should I sell my Mustang?

FESTA

I don't have anything specifically on Henry Ford.

CALICO

Okay.

FESTA

If you find out what IBM did during the Holocaust, you're going to want to sell all your computer gear.

CALICO

The title of the book that Tamara's mentioned a couple of times is called *Black is Beautiful*, and it's by a philosopher named Paul C. Taylor, who actually teaches here at Vanderbilt. We also have a question about the concert hall as a museum. What are some of the ways that performing arts organizations could approach programming? What do we do about financial considerations that influence what gets programmed, inevitably, right? This is what some of us have already mentioned, that something people will pay to see is something an opera company needs to program. What are the ways that you can approach programming that take those things into account? Because new works are often, they can be financially risky. What are your thoughts on that?

FESTA

I think you have to take big risks and get lucky, because you have to do something dangerous, and you have to bring something in that's going to get written about, and the word's going to get out, and then it has to succeed. And those are two big ifs. And the risky things are often the very expensive things, and careers founder on lost bets here. I don't envy, frankly, the people who have to make these decisions. But I do think that all art benefits when—the bigger the risk, the bigger reward—when it pays off.

CALICO

Yeah, and that has historically also been true. Lots of new opera, but not much of it survives, but it doesn't mean it wasn't heard, and it doesn't always mean that only the best operas survive, as we know. Mark.

BURFORD

I was just going to say, does canon formation operate the same way it did a hundred years ago when really the opera house—I just wonder how does a work become—are we in fact going back to the situation that you described earlier, Joy, where it's just every year—it's about seeing new opera, and it's not about seeing a rotating series of operas multiple times. It began there and then we had this warhorse era. Are we moving back to that era where seeing new opera is what it means to see opera? Or is it some other thing where we're

leavening the canon with new work? I don't know what the answer is, but I think thinking through what it's going to mean to program opera, I think that's shifting in some ways that are perhaps indeterminate right now.

CALICO

Yeah, Tamara.

LEVITZ

Sorry, I didn't have a comment except that I do think, again, that all of the repertoire can be seen from a certain perspective. And I don't have another comment on the repertoire, but I wanted to come to something that's been coming up quite a bit, and that is saying Richard Wagner was an antisemite. The word antisemitism is being thrown around a lot now, especially in Germany. There's an antisemitism debate where, let's say Documenta this summer was accused of being antisemitic, and the word's being used to describe, let's say, critique of Israel and other things. And it seems very important to be very specific. This is responding to the very interesting things Paul has been saying. If someone is an antisemite, that's not a reason, again, to cancel him. Maybe we have to get into, like Paul was saying, what in Wagner is communicating anti-Jewish thought, or anti-Black thought that can be harmful to people. For example, when I describe my own experience, if there was a culture in Germany of people throwing vegetables when someone Spanish or Black was on the stage, that's a culture that is extremely racist. How did that come about? And so on. I just wanted to add that clarification, because I think it can just really become an empty word, antisemitism, and maybe anti-Jewish is better, and then maybe looking in detail at what we're talking about.

BURFORD

I just want to add to that. I completely agree and I think that there is a challenge with these words that are placeholders and don't let us actually talk about the work of art. The earlier comment about Mozart's operas being misogynistic. There is misogyny in Mozart's operas, but also when he is setting Beaumarchais, is setting a play that really is a very pro-feminist play that he's setting, and that there's the fact that there are multiple women. It's not a matter of rescuing Mozart, but thinking about how does, changing the question, just getting the "-isms" out of the way and say, "How does gender operate in Mozart's operas? How does representation operate in Wagner's operas?" Might be a more productive way of us producing that connective tissue between the kind of charges that we're talking about and the works and how they operate, and how we're invited to participate in them as listeners. I

think some of those words can actually be more blockages, can shed more heat than light sometimes.

CALICO

Thank you for that Mark. You're absolutely right. And I think one of the ways that's those interventions can happen is with directors. Edward B. has something in the Q&A about, given the richness of this material, it seems that it can bear diverse and socially relevant interpretations, and I would absolutely agree with this. I think this is quite common on European opera stages, less common in the United States, for interventionist, what I would call an interventionist production that can bring these other experiences, or what perhaps have been a subtext to the surface. So he mentions particularly Yuval Sharon's Bayreuth *Lohengrin*, which explored the empowerment of women, Kevin Maynard's work at Trilogy Opera, using *The Ring* to reflect African American experiences. I think this is absolutely one of the things that I would put forth as a very positive way to engage with repertoire we already know. Yeah, Paul.

FESTA

I would just add, it's important for us to remember that Hitler loved this man's music. He loved the family, the family loved him. The relationship between Hitler and the Wagners turns your stomach. On the other hand, the rest of the party did not like him so much. Hitler's always trying to get his higher-ups to go to the opera, and they would blow him off, and then there would be empty seats in the theater. He'd be pulling soldiers out of bars and making them sit through *Meistersinger.* Wagner was not a good fit with Nazi ideology. He was a leftist. He was a leftist insurgent. He was exiled from his beloved country for 12 years, because he was fighting against authoritarianism. He was against having standing armies. The Nazi youth had no toleration for any of this. And it was just because Der Führer had this musical obsession. And of course he liked the antisemitism very much, but the antisemitism was pretty much the only thing that maps onto Nazi ideology with any kind of regularity.

CALICO

There's German nationalism.

FESTA

Sure. Yeah, absolutely, that works too.

CALICO

Yeah, Tamara.

LEVITZ

I just wanted to say, also, thank you for that, Paul. I wanted to say, coming to the question, I couldn't agree with the person who said this more. I think so much is in what happens on the stage. And when I go with students to the opera, it's so exciting when a director has done something, and you realize he's made an intervention. And even in Puccini where sometimes Puccini gives you no space, gives the director very little chance sometimes, I've seen directors do it. It seems like an investment in those kinds of directors and all kinds of different staging. I just love the comments. I just wanted to say that.

CALICO

I would add, thank you, Tamara, for that. We are nearing the end of our time. Does anybody want to have some closing remarks? I think it's not a spoiler alert to say we haven't solved this issue. I do think we've put out some provocative ideas for how audiences and opera companies might engage with this. Does anybody want to wrap up?

FESTA

(Jokingly) I think we solved it. I'm good.

LEVITZ

I would just say thank you to Seattle Opera, because I think watching their programming from afar, it's wonderful they're taking these initiatives to have the conversations. That's the way everything gets going, and to do the programs and the hiring, and the questions they're asking, that's just really important, so I thank Seattle Opera.

CALICO

Yes, as do I, and thank you for the opportunity to talk this over with these amazing colleagues. All right, thank you so much. I'm going to end the webinar here. I hope anyone who hasn't seen the Seattle Opera production of *Tristan* yet will have a chance to do so. Thank you.