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January 2017

The Metropolitan Opera
National Council Auditions
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

Karen Mohr, Editor

Demystifying Auditions Judging: Opera Colorado's Greg Carpenter



Shortly before the opening of Opera Colorado's production of La Fanciulla del West, Chris Mohr chatted with Opera Colorado General Director Greg Carpenter about being a Met Auditions judge.

CM: What do you look for as a judge?

GC: Judging a competition is so different than sitting in on [casting] auditions where you have specific repertoire in mind and you're looking for the right singer for the right role. With the Met auditions, we're told by the Met that our job is to focus on who, regardless of age, we think has the best opportunity for a career based on their talent. [We consider] the voice, the use of language, the sense of style, in other words, different styles of Mozart, Puccini, Verdi, and contemporary opera. We look for the combination of that, and how it relates to physicality to a certain degree. We always talk about a "package:" does this person have the "package" for success? So what we're really looking for at the Met auditions is a person who displays the beginnings of a package who we think has a great opportunity to develop further, or already displays that package almost in its entirety. I judge at the district level, so a lot what we look at is what's coming into that region from the different districts and how these people will fare against that competition. How will they hold up, are they going to do their best in that environment? There are a few things that we're looking for, but a lot of it is the package. Do they display those bits and pieces that indicate they this person has an opportunity for a really good career?

CM: Do you have much age awareness? If you see potential in a 21 year-old, how do you balance that against a 29 year-old who's more polished and trained, but maybe has less potential?

GC: First of all, that's why you have three judges, so you're getting a full range of information, and hopefully with all of that on the table, you can make an astute decision. I personally will always look at who has most of the package, the kind of talent to move forward. If somebody is really young and has a couple of things out of place, for example maybe their diction isn't great, or maybe the vocal technique is just not 100% there yet, that's the kind of person that I say if there's money for an Encouragement Award, let's encourage them. If they're 21, since you can apply until you're 30, they've got many years yet to continue to develop their talent, and if they're that good that we're paying attention to them now, imagine what they'll be in two years. If there's somebody that I think is more ready for the challenge of being in the region or the possibility of going from the region to the semi-finals and the finals in New York, I ask how is that person going to stand up in that environment which is super high-pressure. It's huge. So looking at that, a 21 year-old with some really good raw talent might not stand up well in that higher pressure auditioning environment, but two years from now, may have a new set of skills, more experience, a more refined instrument, and they still have the *(continued right)*

2015 Winner Update: Soprano Christine Price

The Rocky Mountain Regional Winner is in the prestigious Artist Diploma in Opera Studies (ADOS) program of the Marcus Institute for Vocal Arts at the Juilliard School. Future engagements include Susanna in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Opera in Williamsburg, covering Servilia in Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and the Governess in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* with Opera Columbus.



2017 ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGIONAL AUDITIONS

New Mexico District
Saturday, January 14
10:00am
African American
Performing Arts Center
310 San Pedro Dr NE
Albuquerque

Colorado-Wyoming District
Saturday, January 28
9:30am

Rocky Mountain Regional Finals
Sunday, January 29
1:30pm
Robert and Judi
Newman Center for the
Performing Arts
University of Denver

National Grand Finals
Sunday, March 19, 3:00pm
Metropolitan
Opera House

opportunity to be part of that competition. Somebody at the end, if they're a 29 year-old or a 28 year-old, and they display everything you want, I say, move them on, because they have only another year or so to participate in the Met audition.

CM: With three judges, how do you deal with differences? Is it usually a consensus or do you sometimes have to take a vote?

GC: I've been really really lucky. I've been judging the Met auditions for six or seven years now, and usually a couple of times a year. I've just always had the best time with judges. We're all there to do a job, and we all know what that job is. We have a true sense of what our duty is, we're not making any money at it, we're giving back to the industry that's been so good to us. We got encouragement from this industry, and we're *(continued, page 2)*

(Greg Carpenter, continued from page 1)

there to provide encouragement to the next generation. For that reason, I think there's a great sense of collegiality among judges. Every time I judge, there's maybe one singer that we disagree on where they belong, not necessarily do they deserve to be moved on, but where do they belong in that pecking order? It tends to be someone who is on the cusp: do we move them on or do we give them an Encouragement Award? I would say [the discussions are] never contentious and they're never arguments, they're just really productive discussions about those attributes that distinguish between somebody moving on to the next round and somebody getting encouragement.

CM: How do you explain the often divergent opinions between audiences and judges and why even very knowledgeable opera lovers are sometimes baffled by the judges' choices?

GC: Judges are given a very strong directive to [identify] talent that can grow and that can potentially become world-class talent, at the Met or elsewhere. Audiences are often not listening with those refined ears, they're looking at what may be more surface things. There are two different sets of ears, and often the audience will gravitate to someone that just sings really great high notes, or has great stage presence, but may not have the detail in language skills or style that a judge will pick up on.

Remembering and Thanking the Extraordinary Ruth McEwen

Ruth McEwen passed away at her home in Lakewood, Colorado, on February 7, 2015 at age 102. Ruth taught English and Music at Arvada High School from 1937-1942, and at the Daniels School from 1942-1945. Ruth's love of teaching and music inspired her life. She founded the Jefferson Youth Symphony, and was an advisor for several organizations, including the College of Music at the University of Colorado, the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, and the Young Artist Competition sponsored by the Denver Symphony. Ruth was the president of the Denver Symphony Guild, Lakewood's Women's Club, and the Rocky Ridge Foundation in Estes Park. She was a trustee for the Golden Symphony, the Denver Symphony, and the Young Musicians of Colorado Foundation.

Ruth included our local Metropolitan Opera Auditions in a trust since 1994 and increased the amount to \$25,000 in 2005. We are deeply grateful for this wonderful and generous gift. It will help us meet our budget for 2017 and enable us to support the development of young artists, which was such an important part of Ruth's life.

If you would like to include the Metropolitan Opera Auditions in your estate plan and help aspiring singers to realize their dreams, contact Steve Dilts at sdiltsj@mac.com or 720-530-0483.

The Metropolitan Opera
National Council Auditions
ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

Karen Mohr
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Denver, CO 80235

Coming Soon!
**Rocky Mountain Regional
Finals**
**Sunday, January 29, 2017,
1:30pm**
**Robert & Judi Newman
Center for the
Performing Arts
University of Denver**

Metropolitan Opera 2017 HD Calendar

Verdi: Nabucco

Saturday, January 7, 2017, 10:55am

Gounod: Romeo et Juliette

Saturday, January 21, 2017, 10:55am

Dvorak: Rusalka

Saturday, February 25, 2017, 10:55am

Verdi: La Traviata

Saturday, March 11, 2017, 10:55am

Mozart: Idomeneo

Saturday, March 25, 2017, 10:55am

Tchaikovsky: Eugene Onegin

Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:55am

Strauss: Der Rosenkavalier

Saturday, May 13, 2017, 10:30am

Encore screenings will be shown Wednesdays at 6:30pm the following week.
See www.metopera.org for cast information and to find local theaters.