

*Lyric*  
**Unlimited**

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

JOYD ROSENBERG



EDUCATE

ENGAGE

EXPLORE



“Through its Lyric Unlimited program, headed by Cayenne Harris, Lyric not only plans a wide array of programs targeted to many different communities but relentlessly assesses the ones that it does and refines them for each incarnation.” ANDREW PATNER, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES



*Halley's Comet makes its 1910 appearance in Lyric Unlimited's mariachi opera El Pasado Nunca Se Termina.*

*Cover: Tenor Jonathan Johnson and the dragon in Lyric Unlimited's new Family Performance, The Magic Victrola.*

# EDUCATE ENGAGE EXPLORE

**Lyric Unlimited**, established in 2012, is an ongoing initiative and a department of Lyric Opera of Chicago that administers education and community engagement programs and new artistic initiatives. General director Anthony Freud's vision is for Lyric Unlimited to help redefine the function of Lyric Opera of Chicago in the community it serves and steward the art of opera through the next century. The mandate is for the company to take a larger role in the civic identity of Chicago by engaging a broader, more representative audience, including people and communities for whom opera has traditionally had little or no relevance or place.

In the 2014/15 season Lyric Unlimited addressed this directive through three broad, interrelated efforts:

- Continuing to develop and refine Lyric Unlimited's education programs, involving almost **13,000** Chicago public school students and more than **42,000** students total.
- Engaging with new individuals and communities through collaborations with over two dozen different cultural organizations, many with no previous association with opera.
- Exploring what opera can be and whom it is for through the commissioning and premiering of three new works, each taking the art form in a new direction.

As a result, more than **126,000** people have learned about, experienced, and perhaps drawn new conclusions about the resonance and relevance of opera through Lyric Unlimited activities.



The fall 2014 tour of **Opera in the Neighborhoods** broke with a longstanding tradition of presenting adaptations of standard operas and instead featured an original opera composed specifically for children. *The Brothers Grimm* by Dean Burry delighted more than **17,000** primary students and their teachers.

Lyric Unlimited also produced a *Brothers Grimm* **study guide** for students and teachers and held a **professional development workshop** to help teachers prepare their classes for the performances.

For the second year in a row, secondary teachers were offered a wider range of choices from Lyric's mainstage productions in Lyric Unlimited's **Performances for Students** program. More than **6,500** secondary students came to the Civic Opera House to experience one of seven different mainstage operas.

Lyric Unlimited produced study guides and held teacher **professional development workshops** for *Carousel* and *The Passenger*.

**Backstage Tours** complement all of Lyric Unlimited's education programs and also serve as a stand-alone introduction to opera. The popular field trip attracted more than **3,000** participants, and advances in guide training and evaluation further improved an already high-quality educational experience.

The newly-enhanced **Opera Residencies** program partners Lyric Unlimited teaching artists with classroom teachers to collaboratively develop and deliver curricula ranging in scope from four weeks to the entire school year. Elementary residencies focused on creating and performing an original opera; secondary residencies centered on in-depth study of a Lyric mainstage opera. In all, more than **1,000** students received intensive opera education.





“This single experience has exposed me to the many creative things that I can try and get involved in.”

ANTONIO, PERFORMANCES FOR STUDENTS  
PARTICIPANT FROM MOUNT CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL

*Sarah Ponder and Katy Compton  
in The Brothers Grimm for  
Opera in the Neighborhoods.*



Artist involvement is central to Lyric Unlimited's efforts. **Renée Fleming**—world-renowned soprano, Lyric Opera Creative Consultant, and National Cultural Ambassador for the Chicago Public Schools Arts Education Plan—is a driving force in the creation of new Lyric Unlimited programs and collaborations.


As Lyric Unlimited's **Community Ambassadors**, internationally-acclaimed opera singers **Ana María Martínez** and **Eric Owens** met with more than **100** students in elementary and high schools to share their experiences and break down barriers to participation in opera.

The almost **500** voice students in the five member schools of Lyric Unlimited's **Vocal Partnership Program** are greatly enriched by singular access to Lyric artists and staff, as well as performances and special programs. Activities included master classes with Renée Fleming, Eric Owens, and Valerie Bernhardt, a question and answer session with Karen Slack, two Lyric performances, and backstage tours of the Civic Opera House.

Lyric Unlimited nurtures a burgeoning demographic of opera fan with its **Youth Opera Council**, a group of 25 high school students who meet regularly at the Civic Opera House to learn from Lyric staff and artists and to create opera experiences for teen audiences. The Council hosted five events and shared their passion for opera with more than **300** of their peers.



*Renée Fleming with Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mark Strand in an event presented in collaboration with the Poetry Foundation.*

A woman with short, wavy hair in shades of pink and purple is performing on a stage. She is wearing a long-sleeved, light blue and pink costume with a large, multi-layered, ruffled skirt. Her right arm is raised, and she has a surprised or expressive facial expression. The background is a textured, reddish-brown wall. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the performer.

Lyric Unlimited introduced opera to children ages 5-10 and their families with its **Family Performance** in the Civic Opera House. *The Magic Victrola*, with an original concept and script by David Kersnar and Jacqueline Russell, incorporated musical highlights from popular operas in a whimsical fantasy adventure that charmed and intrigued the nearly **3,500** children and parents in attendance. The cast featured singers from The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center alongside professional actors, and in a Family Performance first, Lyric Unlimited commissioned an original set and costumes for the production.

TODD ROSENBERG

Hlengiwe Mkhwanazi,  
Caroline Heffernan,  
Logan Neuschaefer,  
and Will Liverman in  
*The Magic Victrola*.



“With every attendee ... the future of this magical and multifaceted art form had another great boost.”

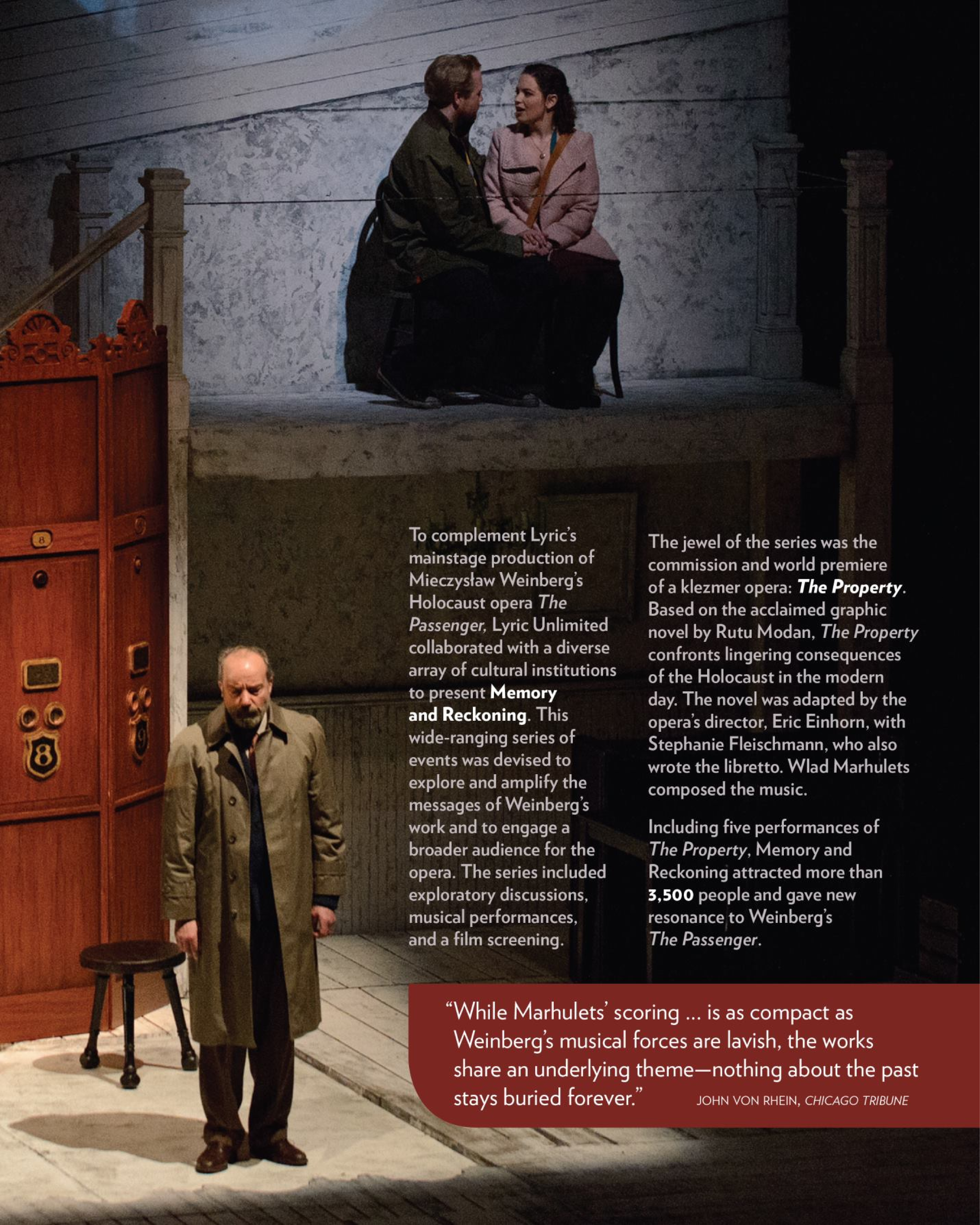
ANDREW PATNER, *CHICAGO SUN-TIMES*



ROBERT KUSEL

*Jill Grove, James Maddelena, Nathaniel Olson,  
and Anne Slovin in The Property.*





To complement Lyric's mainstage production of Mieczysław Weinberg's Holocaust opera *The Passenger*, Lyric Unlimited collaborated with a diverse array of cultural institutions to present **Memory and Reckoning**. This wide-ranging series of events was devised to explore and amplify the messages of Weinberg's work and to engage a broader audience for the opera. The series included exploratory discussions, musical performances, and a film screening.

The jewel of the series was the commission and world premiere of a klezmer opera: ***The Property***. Based on the acclaimed graphic novel by Rutu Modan, *The Property* confronts lingering consequences of the Holocaust in the modern day. The novel was adapted by the opera's director, Eric Einhorn, with Stephanie Fleischmann, who also wrote the libretto. Wlad Marhulets composed the music.

Including five performances of *The Property*, **Memory and Reckoning** attracted more than **3,500** people and gave new resonance to Weinberg's *The Passenger*.

“While Marhulets’ scoring ... is as compact as Weinberg’s musical forces are lavish, the works share an underlying theme—nothing about the past stays buried forever.”

JOHN VON RHEIN, CHICAGO TRIBUNE

**Caminos a la ópera** (Pathways to Opera) is Lyric Unlimited's Latino audience development initiative which expands Lyric's commitment to Chicago's Latino community through partnership, engagement, and collaboration. Through *Caminos*, Lyric Unlimited creates and presents new and culturally relevant works, hosts events with partner organizations in community venues, and fosters enduring relationships with Latino audiences.

The centerpiece for 2014/15 was the commission and premiere of a new mariachi opera: ***El Pasado Nunca Se Termina*** (*The Past Is Never Finished*), with music by José "Pepe" Martínez and libretto by Leonard Foglia. The five preview performances at community venues and two world premiere performances at the Civic Opera House attracted a total audience of nearly **9,000**.

Coming on the heels of the world's first mariachi opera (*Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, presented by Lyric Unlimited in 2013), the success of *El Pasado* proves the vitality of a new genre.

A key to the success of *Caminos a la ópera* is its partnerships with leading Latino cultural organizations and the creation of collaboratively-developed events, including performances by cast members, community receptions, mariachi lecture/demonstrations, workshops, student performances, and even a mariachi jam session. These events drew an additional audience of **1,100**.



TODD ROSENBERG

*Abigail Santos Villalobos,  
Ricardo Rivera, Vanessa Alonzo,  
and members of Mariachi Aztlán  
in El Pasado Nunca Se Termina.*



“Whether you consider it a full-fledged opera or an entertainment that’s poised between music theater and mariachi really doesn’t matter. What does matter is that *Pasado* seems well on its way towards becoming a classic of its genre.” JOHN VON RHEIN, CHICAGO TRIBUNE



# EDUCATE ENGAGE EXPLORE

Lyric Unlimited continues to provide access to opera and opera education to its loyal patrons, new audiences, and those who are simply curious—in and out of the Civic Opera House.

More than **8,500** college and graduate students saw Lyric performances at a steep discount through the **NEXT** ticket program.

The annual **Stars of Lyric Opera at Millennium Park** concert gave an estimated **16,000** Chicagoans access to world-class opera music for free, while low-income Chicago seniors received free tickets to the annual **Senior Matinee**.

Lyric's renowned chorus was featured in a pair of concerts entitled **A Wondrous Sound: The Lyric Opera Chorus Celebrates a New Season**, attended by more than **1,500**.

Three **Lyric Uncorked** sessions offered more than **100** opera newcomers an informal social setting to interact with and learn from a range of opera professionals.

And **Pre-Opera Talks** enriched the opera experience for more than **37,000** Lyric patrons.



**LYRIC UNLIMITED:**  
educating children and adults;  
engaging with communities  
and organizations;  
exploring what opera and  
opera companies can be.

**LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO**

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*John D. & Alexandra C. Nichols*

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**Renée Fleming**

*Creative Consultant*

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**Cayenne Harris**, Lyric Unlimited Director

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