BACKSTAGE PASS

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Farrow's Angels, performing Jan 31 at the Civic Center
Daniel Biaggi
Palm Beach Poppa’s general director brings a historic aura into the 21st century

The opera world can have a reputation for being monotonous, overly stuffy—at its best, perhaps—during the time of mummies and mymys. But Daniel Biaggi, general director of the Palm Beach Poppa, has made significant strides in democratizing the art form to broader audiences. He connected Palm Beach with the Waterbury Opera, a free, year-round concert for the community hosted at a downtown amphitheater. He has expanded his company’s educational programming with children’s performances and series such as Opera in the Outdoors, Lunch & Learn and its SUITEuntu concert Opera Out Loud.

Biaggi has brought in English-language programming, including the world premiere production of the American opera “Tennessee, A Love Story,” under his leadership. Palm Beach Poppa’s 2023-2024 season, launched at the Kravis Center’s Civic Center, runs from June to March, with a star-studded lineup including Lea Salonga, Renée Fleming, and more. Biaggi has a vision for the future of opera, saying that opera is “the most democratic art form.”

What is your vision for the future of opera? Do you see a shift in the audience demographics?

I think that opera is the most democratic art form. It has always been accessible to everyone, regardless of their background or economic status. Our goal is to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to experience the beauty of opera and to appreciate its artistry.

Will you continue to explore new programming ideas to attract new audiences?

Yes, we are constantly looking for new ways to connect with our audience. We have a diverse range of programming, from traditional operas to modern pieces, and we are always looking for ways to make our productions more accessible and engaging. We also have a strong focus on education and outreach programs to help promote the art form and attract new audiences.

Are you concerned about the lack of diversity in the opera world, and are you taking any steps to address this issue?

We believe that diversity is essential to the health and vitality of opera. We are committed to creating opportunities for underrepresented artists and to showcasing a wide range of voices and perspectives. We also work with organizations and institutions that are dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusion in the arts.

What do you think is most important in your role as a general director?

It is crucial to maintain a balance between tradition and innovation. On one hand, we want to honor the rich history and tradition of opera, but on the other hand, we want to push the boundaries and challenge the norms. A key aspect of my role is to work closely with our artistic directors, composers, and performers to create productions that are both engaging and thought-provoking.