

# Opera that Moves

International Opera Theater drives a classic art form into a bold new era.

**I**nternational Opera Theater (IOT), a nimble global company with a passionate, interdisciplinary approach, is moving audiences in Philadelphia and beyond.

With bases in Philadelphia and Italy, partners from the Festival of Culture in Bergamo to the Philadelphia Orchestra, artists from 36 cultures, sustainable costumes, kinetic art sets, self-discovery educational programs, and ten world premieres, IOT has made a name for itself in just a decade. Launched in 2003, IOT is the brainchild of founder and stage director, Karen Saillant, a classical soprano who trained and performed in Italy. “I always believed opera singers could be more spontaneous,” she says.

After 16 months caring for her coma-stricken husband, she knew that a profound form of communication was possible. Like the Florentine Camerata, she sees opera as a powerful force for transformation. “I want goose bumps,” she laughs. “And we are fearless in their pursuit.”

IOT’s Italian music director, Gianmaria Griglio, agrees: “Each performance is unique: a combination of emotion flowing through the audience, the stage, and the pit.”

In May, audiences will experience that passion with the U.S. premiere of *Jago*, sequel to Verdi’s *Otello*, based on an original story by Saillant and in celebration of Verdi’s bicentennial. In August in Rome, Como, and Citta’ della Pieve, and in October for Global Philadelphia with the Alliance Française, is Griglio’s opera, *Camille Claudel*, based on the life of the great French sculptor, paramour of Rodin.

“Making art is the same as falling in love,” Griglio says. “You can’t control it or plan it. You just feel it.” His analogy, says Saillant, is the ultimate metaphor for all IOT projects: “Everything we do is like falling in love.”



Carlo Pedini’s *Jago* makes its U.S. premiere May 30, 31, and June 1 at the Media Theatre, Philadelphia.

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